

..MAX..
OF THE NORTH

M A BRUCE

..MAX..
OF THE NORTH

By Magnus A. Bruce

PS

3503

R94

M46

1915

ER

Ex LIBRIS
UNIVERSITATIS
ALBERTAENSIS

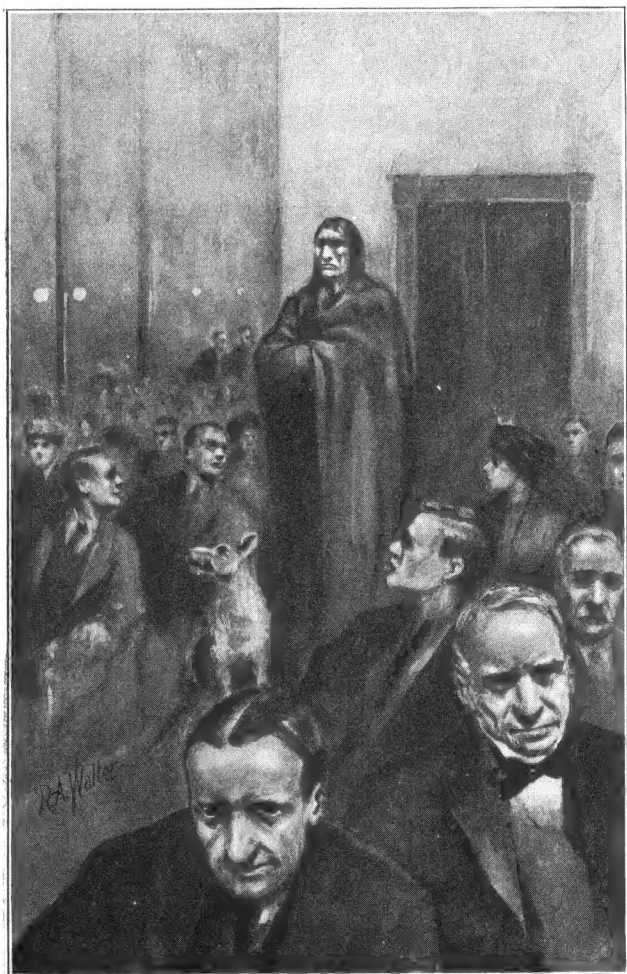


Dec

10

Copy of letter

MAX OF THE NORTH



"— to usher in the strangest sight of all." — Page 304

MAX OF THE NORTH

A NOVEL

BY

MAGNUS A. BRUCE



DIEDERICH-SCHAEFER CO.
PUBLISHERS
MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN
1915

Copyright, 1915
by
Diederich-Schaefer Co.

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	OUT OF THE WILDS, - - - -	9
II.	TALES THAT ARE STRANGE, - - - -	22
III.	FOR JOY NOT EDIFICATION, - - - -	42
IV.	INTO THE TROUBLED CURRENT, - - - -	49
V.	TARRYING A WEE, - - - -	59
VI.	THE WARRIOR AT THE HEARTH, - - - -	75
VII.	IN HOSTILE ARRAY, - - - -	88
VII.	GLADSOME RIPPLES, - - - -	109
IX.	SOMEBODY SHOWS INTEREST, - - - -	129
X.	ANOTHER METHOD, - - - -	136
XI.	DAKOTA CRAFT, - - - -	145
XII.	AT THE FORK IN THE WATERS, - - - -	160
XIII.	NEW SPRINGS, - - - -	170
XIV.	REVENGE THWARTED, - - - -	179
XV.	SPARKLING TRIBUTARIES, - - - -	191
XVI.	THE FATALIST, - - - -	209
XVII.	A CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM, - - - -	227
XVIII.	NO, NOT IN ISRAEL, - - - -	243
XIX.	A MAGNANIMITY THAT SPANS CONTINENTS,	159
XX.	THE LAW OF THE HORNED HAND, - - - -	273
XXI.	"THE TIMES ARE WILD," - - - -	293
XXII.	THE NEW YEAR, - - - -	312
XXIII.	WAYWARD WATERS, - - - -	337

Max of the North

CHAPTER ONE.

OUT OF THE WILDS.

Far in northern Canada, in a securely sheltered spot on the confines of Manitoba and the unexplored district of Keewatin, there dwelt a separated band of Indians of the tribe of the Dakota. Their smoking tepees lay in straggling formation about an inlet that first converged to the narrows then broadened into the blue waters of Lake Winnipegosis. On either side of the isthmus stood two high rocky sentinels that effectually guarded the village against unwelcome blasts from the lake, while a semicircle of thickly wooded bluffs did similarly efficient service on the landward. Far from the hand of the ambitious white man were these children of nature, and therefore at peace; far from civilization and therefore happy.

On the incline of the northern promontory, with a full view over land and water, stood two Indians, Flying Arrow and the proud old chieftain of the tribe, Silver Fox. While the gigantic frame and bright countenance of the former gave evidence of the very bud of manhood, the white hair and furrowed face of the sachem allows us to judge of years not far removed from the centenary. With all the disparagement in age, however, there was one very

similar note in their facial delineaments; it was that impress of command so often found in men destined to wield super-eminent power.

To one side of the hunters and not far from a smouldering fire lay a dead stag, a trophy undoubtedly of the chase just come to a close.

Though both (Flying Arrow more so than his elder) had some acquaintance with the English tongue, their present conversation was of course carried on in the Dakota language.

Flying Arrow leaning upon the stock of his rifle, was evidently in a dissatisfied state of mind: indeed, the set look of his manly face leads us to suppose that he had come to a resolution which must be carried out at all hazards.

"Many winters have I besought Silver Fox to tell me the story of my birth but in vain," he was continuing in rather husky tones. "My voice has been like the rifle's echo which strikes the mountain 'Little Bear,' and without effecting anything comes back again to the speaker."

Sentiments of a totally different nature pervaded the aged chieftain; contrary to what we might expect in such a stoic, there was even a plaint of sadness in his answering words. "Long has the face of Flying Arrow been like the sky when the thunder-bird flaps its wings over the Dakota wigwam. The chief's heart too is heavy for he never expected his son to raise his voice against the grand honors which were being heaped upon him; he was to become the great sachem of the Dakotas and to lead the children back to their former power and glory; he was to—"

"Flying Arrow knows well the thoughts of the chief," interrupted the brave as he walked with a few rapid strides to the spot where lay the stag. "Silver Fox has been very kind to me these many winters and because of that have I tried hard to kill my own wishes: if I forget this question, you promise to make me sachem, to place me over all the Dakota warriors, and therefore is the heart of the son full of thanks. Flying Arrow has endeavored to follow the desires of the chief but without success: often when this thought came, did I turn my head to gaze upon other things, but what is a part of one's life cannot be torn out so easily. The chief knows who is *his* father," he concluded, looking directly at the old man. "Cannot the warrior know it also?"

"May the moon never give sleep to the bad Indian who first told you of your paleface birth," came in fiery solemnity from Silver Fox while he raised his arm to the imaginary object of his anathema. "May sickness enter into his bones and spirits terrify him during the night! May the thunder-bird always flap his wings over his head; may the god of lightning tear his wigwam to pieces!" With his white hair flowing loose in the breeze and the vengeful fire darting from his beadlike eyes, the aged leader seemed indeed like one possessing power to draw curses from the Above. After a studied and painful silence he again turned his attention to his protege. "Perhaps a fog lies in the eyes of my brother that he dreams of a more glorious title among the palefaces than that of being the great leader of the Dakotas."

"Night does not surround the vision of Flying

Arrow," corrected the other, proudly throwing back his well-contoured head. "He wishes the Dakotas to return to their former glory as eagerly as the chief. What fate awaits him amongst his white brothers he does not know, nor is he so foolish as to be led away by an uncertainty: the future remains with the gods. Something in his heart is calling and Flying Arrow cannot still the voice."

"Flying Arrow is like his name," nodded the sachem sadly as he walked absently to one side. "He is anxious to fly far away from the bow that holds him." Then turning about with renewed plea, "Has he perhaps been treated unkindly by the Dakotas; have we not taught him everything; have we not allowed the paleface talker to see him often?"

This latter remark referred to an itinerant minister who under the condition that he make no attempts at conversion, had been tolerated as the teacher of Flying Arrow. The good man had accepted the restriction only because he finally hoped to overcome the sachem's prejudice. After four months however he was sufficiently convinced of the old man's inflexibility, to wander forth to a more favorable harvest. The fur-traders from whom the young warrior gleaned bits of knowledge, we shall not describe; among other teachers only a student is worthy of note, who had remained at the village fully eleven months, in order thus to secure the best opportunity of studying ethnology.

The conversation was interrupted for a moment, as drawing out his pipe the chieftain walked to the smouldering fire, selected a glowing twig, then as the

Indian custom had it, sent the first puff skywards to Michabo and the next four to the cardinal points of direction.

The young man had in the meantime taken a seat on a jutting ledge at his rear. Only now did he understand the deep scheme carried out against the unsuspecting missionary. "Silver Fox is like the owl," he replied admiringly when the latter had returned to his former position. "Long Speech was like a child whom the chief emptied of all he knew. I was to be a Dakota in religion but a paleface in knowledge."

Silver Fox threw out his arms, passing his keen eyes all the while in grateful survey over the subject of his dreams. "You are tall as a pine, strong as the moose and active as the deer. My children must succeed under such a leader: they must return to their former power and glory."

Allowing such sentiments to continue would only make the final disappointment of the speaker more bitter; they must be corrected at once. "It cannot be: it cannot be," declared Flying Arrow rising. "Voices are calling me from afar and I must listen."

In the midst of defeat an inspiration to still carry the situation seemed suddenly to have come to the chieftain, for at this point without a word of explanation he took his companion by the arm and led him even to the pinnacle of the promontory. Land and water lay in mighty panorama far below them. "We do not wish Flying Arrow to leave the Dakota wigwam," now declared the chief with revived hopefulness while he fixed his sharp eyes meaningly upon his protege. "If he will stay he need not find out his

white name, and knowing nothing be undisturbed and happy." Here he lowered his voice by force of the disagreeable nature of the antithesis. "If however he insists on leaving, then shall we tell him about his father and mother."

Suddenly Silver Fox retreated a step and raising his arms like a prophet of old over the entrancing scene below them, broke out in tremulous voice: "Choose: Will you know your name and leave us; or not know, and be the chieftain over all these people? Choose."

The hands remained suspended while the young warrior should make his choice between ties of kin and worldly honors. On the one hand was an unknown voice with an unknown future; on the other, a unique position over a noble race, glorious possibilities without end, golden opportunities for the full exercise of every innate and acquired faculty of his body and soul. And truly the present setting of the latter picture was beautiful enough to excite the cupidity of any man in such a dilemma.

Stretching to a watery horizon on his left, lay the crystal waters of Lake Winnipegosis; below him on the right lay an immense valley converted now into a perfect garden of Eden by the silent hands of that season which the Dakota calls 'the moon of the falling leaf'; upon the inlet's surface which ebbed away from the village, bronze faced youths were hotly engaged in a mimic naval battle, performing maneuvers that might have been a credit even to older hands. In the village proper, squaws bustled about the tepees, papooses played before the doors, while the old men

were either watching them or lazily enjoying the soothing sun of the glorious afternoon. Should he remain with his first resolution those encircling hills where he had so often accompanied Silver Fox, had now heard his voice for the last time: only an hour before had he passed through the luxuriant shade of their golden foliage; had sunk his elastic step into the thick and variegated mosses which carpeted the ground in ever varying and more beautiful design. Neither was the picture yet complete for beyond this delightful Eden lay still other gardens, other villages of the Dakota prepared to acknowledge him as their leader. That he was loved by all there was no doubt; he knew how gladly they would one day raise him in their council, press about him for the inauguration of the long dreamed-of Utopia, acclaiming him all the while in voices exultant as their greatest chief to-be, Flying Arrow.—And over it all hung the sheen of golden autumn, filtered almost to the diaphanous by the pure air of this far northern clime.

Several times his head moved from side to side surveying the fairy scene while every argument which could influence him either way passed in rapid review before his mind. But, many months ago, long before this last struggle had the choice been made. With a voice low yet strong with conviction, he finally turned about to the expectant watcher.

"I will go to my own," he said briefly. "I wish to know the names of those who gave me birth."

An indescribable pang of sorrow flitted over an aged, furrowed face, and two raised arms dropped heavily to their natural position. "The gods have

spoken," spoke the disappointed man. "The heart of Silver Fox will bleed like the deer's when the hunter steals away its fawn but even the chief dare not contradict the gods."

The decision made, Silver Fox could do no better than give a brief explanation of the events which brought about this curious situation. Simultaneously with a Canadian half-breed rising, internal dissension had broken out among the Dakotas across the border. One of their fiercest sachems, Silver Fox, who had long voiced his disgust at the tribe's feeble resistance to the palefaces, determined at length to break away from his own, and seek a land so far removed from civilization that the whites could not follow him with their molestations. In consequence a numerous band began the northward march, pillaging and plundering wherever opportunity offered. Once in Canada, these marauding instincts had almost undisputed freedom since the rebellion just then required the whole attention of the soldiery. At the village of Portage la Prairie some determined to strike a last blow at the palefaces before becoming lost in the wilderness. What damage they inflicted elsewhere shall not be detailed; for our story it is necessary only to know that several braves entered a certain house and besides looting it of a gilt-edged volume, a necklace and a gold watch, ran away with a two year old boy who happened to be playing on the floor at the time. When armed pursuit was at last organized, the cunning Amerinds were already beyond reach: indeed no one suspected their northern route

since they were thought to have doubled on their tracks and returned across the American border.

"I was not among the braves who took you away," continued the chief, "but since no one wished to take care of you, I finally adopted you and gave you the same rights as if you were my own son. The stolen articles came into my possession through the ordinary channel of trading."

Here the story ended: the remainder lay in an uncertain future. Like the hopes of the chieftain, had it been broken off at its very bud.

"What is my father's name?" questioned the warrior at the end of the narrative as Silver Fox apparently did not wish to arouse himself from a stupor. "Where lies the trail to my own tribe?"

"Come!" answered the old leader laconically as he slowly raised his head. "You will see." Not another word could be drawn from him as he led his questioner down the mountain, through the village, and finally into his own tepee.

Immediately upon his entry the chief delved into an old chest in apparent search of something relating to the matter in hand: first, a lady's gold watch of exquisite workmanship was produced, to be followed shortly by the appearance of a large volume of gilt cut, gold clasps, and a richly embossed cover design.

For Flying Arrow, these articles established the first visible link with his unknown past: hands which had reared him, had often manipulated these. The disclosure begun, he longed for its speedy consummation; where now were the owners of the watch and

the book; how did they look exteriorly; what would they say when he appeared to reveal his identity?

"The beads were sold many winters ago," explained Silver Fox referring to the gold necklace stolen upon the same occasion, "because the sachem needed a blanket to protect him from the cold." Sadness oppressed his every word for he thought only of the hopeless future in store for his children. "In the middle of this book," he continued, placing the handsome volume on top of the chest, "is a strange tongue. The writing will tell Flying Arrow who are his parents, because a hunter once told me that the palefaces observe such a custom with one of their books. You know their speech: you will be able to read it."

"It is the Good Book of the palefaces," ejaculated the other, who had a more extensive acquaintance with the manners of the whites. "It is the law by which my white brethern live."

Expectant feelings rose to their height as with the chief's aid he sought out the tell-tale page: a past life was drawing to a close and a new future opening itself before him. Every nerve was strained to its highest tension as a page was finally disclosed where in a strong business-hand was written:

Max Gilbert, born of James and Marie Gilbert on January 2d, 18—, in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, Canada.

The newly discovered white man retreated a step, and throwing back his head thought over the wondrous revelation. "What a strange name was to supersede that of Flying Arrow! In sound it was almost as strong as the one hence to be discarded. Now also

he knew the names of his progenitors. Were they still vigorous or already bearing the white hair of age?" And thus did varied thoughts pass through his rapidly calculating mind, of such a nature as our reader can imagine would necessarily come to one in his peculiar position.

Strangely no resentment arose against the one who had detained him from his own during all these years. The chief was innocent of the first criminal act and for the rest he had too deep an insight into Dakota wrongs to feel anything but sympathy for the ingenious plot contrived for their redemption.

"The Dakota will die now," muttered Silver Fox with bowed head. "Now the palefaces will come upon us and we will have no one to defend us in their council. As for you," he said, looking with revived pride upon his quondam protege, "You will go forth and the spirit tells me you will one day be a great chief amongst your own. In Indian knowledge you are like the 'dreamers of the gods', and of the things of the white man you also know much. You will be as strong as the storm that sweeps away the wigwam, the tree, and even the mountain."

Turning his thoughts now to the departure, he continued, "Flying Arrow may take with him the gold watch. But Silver Fox wishes to keep the Good Book where your white name stands: when the thoughts of the chief then return to his son, he will look at the name and try to be happy. A mother will need no proof when she comes to behold her own blood; should any difficulty arise, the sight of the watch will show that your words do not come from a forked tongue."

The news that Flying Arrow was to leave his Indian brothers spreads like wildfire over the four villages. And what a wail of grief went up from those northern topees as early on the following day, Flying Arrow took his first steps of the long journey to the white man's habitation! There was groaning and weeping mingled with prayers to the Great Spirit to protect their departing brother: papooses reached forth their tiny hands; squaws pressed about him with tears, while the old men prophesied the proximate doom of the whole tribe.

In a large body almost the entire nation followed him to the edge of those bluffs which separated their villages from the southern wilderness. Here Silver Fox, taking the hand of his son, blessed him solemnly, gave him a last assurance that his return to the Dakotas would be welcomed at any time, then went to stand with his own.

Flying Arrow, his heart filled with grief at leaving these fervent friends, did not care even to glance back at his late haunts—he was in a certain way still an Indian and must show no exterior emotion. He had scarcely proceeded a mile across the lowlands however, when hearing a joyful yelp he turned about to behold his faithful dog 'Fire Sticks' at his heels—the companion of his hunting expeditions would follow his master into the strange land.

"The gods give me their protection," muttered the fatalist.

On the cliff, Silver Fox and his band had taken notice of the strange occurrence. "It is a good omen," declared the superstitious chief solemnly. "Flying

Arrow will not return, but will be great amongst his own."

The brief interruption caused Max Gilbert's gaze to turn once more upon the scene of his past years.

There upon the hill-top stood the dusky inhabitants of the village, with shaded eyes watching one whom they loved, slowly vanish in the distance.

CHAPTER TWO.

TALES THAT ARE STRANGE.

The lonely form of a man clad in buckskin, with a dog for sole companion, set out upon that long journey from the Keewatin wilds to the village of Portage la Prairie. For many a wearisome day he continued on his course, now following the detours of rivers, now swimming their swift currents, again floundering through marshes, or climbing mountain heights; difficult it was, but this was the path of the star pointed out to him by Silver Fox. Scarcely a sound did he make as he passed through those silent distances, except for an occasional word to his faithful dog, or a shot from his rifle as a wild duck had to supply him with the necessary sustenance.

Foot-sore and weary, he, once called Flying Arrow, at length arrived at his destination. His expectant feelings were however doomed to receive a rude shock, for upon inquiry, he learned that no one by the name of Gilbert had ever resided in that village. Well aware however of the phenomenon peculiar to western towns whereby they change population so rapidly that the inhabitants of today scarcely know those of yesterday, he never desisted in his diligent search. The education received by his various tutors now stood him in good stead, for though forced to speak slowly, he was able to make himself understood fairly well. Perseverance received its reward when at the

end of another day he was informed that a family of that name did indeed once live there but had moved to Winnipeg perhaps ten years before. Further inquiries fully convinced him of the reliability of this information and gave him also the additional knowledge that he had a little golden-haired sister who might now be about eleven years of age.

Again did man and dog set out on the long journey, this time to the west, naturally of course experiencing hardships similar to those already described. The inclement weather of incipient winter made their progress slow, so that it was several more weeks before a certain snow-covered traveller entered the capital of the celebrated prairie province.

Numerous directions of informants led him more and more away from the business section, until, only when he was in the extreme outskirts, was a little frame house before him finally pointed out as the home of James Gilbert. Only afterwards did he come to recall the peculiar sentiments which invariably underlay the answers of these people: some answered abruptly, even disdainfully, while others again appeared surprised at his ignorance of some apparent circumstance in connection with this matter.

Without realizing for a moment what consternation his strange garb might produce in the beholders, he walked with rapid step to the nearest door and rapped for admittance. A spare, matronly looking woman appeared, and incidentally thus gave him also the first interior view of that abode which he was henceforth to call 'home'. For the brief moment the weary traveller stood nonplussed before her, since in his

haste he had neglected all thought of a definite manner of introduction.

"Are you Mrs. Gilbert?" he began hesitatingly, as he came back to his duty.

"No, sir," she answered in low tones which somehow smote very unwelcomely on his ears. "Haven't you—?"

"Where is she; and where is Mr. Gilbert?" he interrupted more excitedly.

"Mrs. Gilbert is dead already four years, but Mr. Gilbert is in the next room," replied the woman, stepping nervously to one side and at the same time pointing to a half-open door.

The peculiar thrill of expectancy which was permeating his whole frame, rendered him totally oblivious of everything but the discovery in waiting. The bud which had long enshrouded mystery was at last opening its delicate petals to disclose things beautiful and sweet: but one more moment and he would be with his own.

With a few noiseless steps he found himself in the next room—to be almost hurled back by the sight that met his gaze. A long black coffin stood before him and in a chamber whose sole dismal light came from some candles standing like hectic, coughing sentinels over all this death and weirdness. Who was the dead? Had he perhaps mistaken the house? What terrible calamity had come to pass that such a ghastly spectacle should blast the joy of his home-coming? His head swam and a suffocation rose to his throat as he realized whom that dark casket might contain.

Long wonderings and expectations stood rudely

halted by the gruesome hand of death—and that of his own. Half dazed and still reflecting, he walked with unconscious step to the casket to gain the first view of his progenitor. This was his dead father: the hair was silvery gray; the strong face was lined with deep furrows caused no doubt by the troubles he had recently suffered. Once more Max Gilbert was alone, yes, more dismally alone than he had ever been in his whole life.

Then suddenly as his roaming gaze made him turn more squarely about, he found himself looking into the wondering eyes of a little golden-haired girl. Surprised they both were, still for him it constituted probably a relief to be placed once more in communication with the living. The child had strangely not been aroused by his silent entry, and only now raised a tear worn face as if in mute question of the reason of his presence.

Sorrow and grief could not hide a face wondrously beautiful; golden locks in profusion enclosed a picture of candor and innocence that hung like a heavenly light upon a complexion of the most delicate purity. It was a face to be loved at first sight, and possessing that mild sweetness which appeals for and at once receives the sympathetic affections of any beholder.

"Who are you, and from where did you come?" asked the child while a look of apprehension began to shade her countenance.

"This is my sister," was his wondering thought. "To this child must I make myself known."

"I came in a few minutes ago," he answered softly

and appeasingly. "I do not wish to frighten you. I did not see you."

"But who are you?" sweetly insisted the child. "We didn't think an Indian would come to see my father. You are an Indian, aren't you? You have buckskin clothes, moccasins, and a dog." She had edged forward slightly on her chair as if preparing instant flight in the event of a hostile movement on the Indian's part.

Recognizing her apprehension, he at once laid aside his gun and ordered "Fire Sticks" to remain in the rear.

"I did not know your father," he replied with manifest kindness as he attempted a step towards her, "but I would have liked to meet him. Instead I've travelled many hundred miles to tell you a strange story. Can you listen a while?" he finished more deprecatingly than might be imagined of him.

Reassured by his mollifying manner, she somewhat relaxed the tension of her little body. "I'll listen if you'll not hurt me," she responded sweetly, then added half to herself, "I wish father were here."

"I'll never hurt you," he explained with assuring emphasis. "It's—"

"If it's bad news you mustn't tell me," she interrupted while her large blue eyes opened sorrowfully. "So many sad things have happened lately that I couldn't stand any more."

"I'm real sorry for you, child," declared Max as he significantly turned his head towards the still form at his side. "You must feel it very much to lose such a good father."

"Yes, I've been crying all afternoon," she replied, her eyes again turning moist.

"Are you all alone now?" he inquired. "Have you no brothers or sisters?" The last question was uttered with greater interest since unconsciously he had paved the way for his own story.

The evident sincerity of his words and actions had already done much to allay the fears of this artless little maiden. "We don't seem to have any friends at all," she responded while her eyes studied the floor. "Two years ago we used to live in a grand home on Portage Ave., but then something happened that took away all our friends and made us move into this little house."

The unintelligible nature of the circumstance made the child assume a reflective attitude that was fairly bewitching to her observant brother. How innocent she was, and how bright for one of her tender years!

Remembering the second part of his question after a while she again turned her large eyes upon him. "I have no other brothers and sisters," she explained further, then correcting herself, "that is, I haven't now. I used to have a little brother named Max, but he was stolen many years ago by the bad Indians."

Here the woman from without opened the door for a brief moment but satisfied that nothing was amiss, returned again to her work.

Though Max now advanced so near to her that he could have touched her with his hand, the little girl evinced no more fear. "Did your father ever tell you anything about this lost brother?" he asked, intently

watching her countenance for assurance that he might proceed safely with his revelation.

"Oh yes," she answered, coming to her feet. "I still have a coat which used to belong to little Max."

"Father always hoped to find him. Do you know anything about Max?" she finished with the sweetest inflection. The strong desire to find some assistance in her present abandonment was rendering her not only entirely confident with this strangely costumed visitor, but made her grasp at every hope which could possibly bear any consolation in its wake.

"Perhaps I can tell you something very pleasing about your lost brother," he hazarded, looking down upon her with a fatherliness that could not help but be understood. "When I tell you the story you must try hard to believe me because I would not tell a lie to a little girl like you."

"What have you to tell?" she inquired with anxious face. "Are you from the Indians?"

"No," he replied tremulously and slowly, "I am your own brother: I am Max."

The startling announcement had taken her totally unawares, and like a fluttered bird she now flew to the head of the casket containing her father, as if there to seek the counsel and assistance so necessary in the present dilemma. When she finally recovered somewhat from her surprise it was only to give expression to the perplexity which enshrouded her well-meaning soul. "You, my brother? I don't know. Perhaps you are, only you look so much like an Indian. I wish you were my brother because I need

one so very much. You're not trying to deceive me, are you?" she concluded with tender appeal.

Everything must be done to rekindle the confidence which seemed to be on the wane. He, once called Flying Arrow, raised his hand above his head. "I swear by the great Michabo that I speak the truth."

"Who's he?" she asked nervously, arching her eyebrows.

"He is the one who judges our words and punishes us if they are not true."

"Oh, you mean God," was the blithe response. "But you mustn't call Him by such a name. I don't think He'd like it." Taking a step from her position of safety, she suggested, "Let me call in the lady from the kitchen; she'll help me to understand. You're so awful big for me."

"Do not call her in yet," he begged while he retreated a step to give her full room to come forth from her security. "I'm sure you will believe the proof which I will show you."

"What is it? Show it to me," she asked with sudden alertness.

"The Bible I had to leave behind," he began, all the while searching in an inner pocket. "The only proof I have is this gold watch in which you will find your mother's name."

Suspicious, yet wishing to believe, the young girl flew joyously to his outstretched hand. "Mamma told me all about this watch," she exclaimed, breaking forth into further remarks as she diligently examined the precious timepiece. "Yes, here is her name. You know of the bible also. Father told me that it was a

large book with golden clasps." Then she finished pensively, "but there was something else?"

"You mean the necklace," he suggested. "It was sold by the Indian who told me this story."

Again she hung her golden head for her mind was still too youthful to comprehend the details and full meaning of the present disclosure.

"I don't know, but I don't seem to be able to think at all," she whimpered disconsolately. "I think I'm too little to understand you."

"No, you're not, child," he pleaded, beaming on her kindly. "You need not immediately understand everything; I don't wish to force you or to hurry you."

"Let me see the watch again," she hazarded, a little more boldly, scarcely, however, knowing the reason of her words.

He advanced to accede to her request and in so doing briefly touched her babylike fingers. "What a soft and yielding hand this child has!" reflected the quondam Flying Arrow. "What a pleasure and solace, could I forever have this tender creation beside me!"

For a time he watched her absently regarding her mother's name, then again drew her to the realization of their mutual difficulty. "You may always keep that watch," he conceded benignantly.

"O, thank you, sir," answered the child while the first smile played about the corners of her delicate lips. Here another doubt arose in her mind. "But what if I shouldn't believe you? You would then wish to take the watch away with you again."

"But you will believe me," he corrected.

"Perhaps I will," she argued with herself. "Perhaps I will; I don't know."

"If you wish, I will tell you the whole story from the day I was stolen to the present," he attempted hopefully. "You can thus see if I speak the truth for your parents have, no doubt, often explained the whole matter to you." She thought briefly over his offer, then raised her eyes trustfully. "You need not. Your face looks so open and good that I don't believe that you could tell a lie."

"No child," he answered, pleased with her unconscious flattery. "I would gain nothing by deceiving you for you are too young to help me." Again he looked upon her more insinuatingly. "Since, however, you are all alone now, I could help you very much."

"Yes, you could," she agreed sweetly, "for I have no one left in this world to take care of me. I believe too I'd like to have you for a brother, because you'd be so strong in case anyone should wish to hurt me." Here the speaker, clasping her tiny hands, turned her eyes in reverend apostrophe to heaven. "O, God, you've taken away my papa and mama, now send me a brother or I'm left all alone. Tell me whether this is Max. I think I will believe him; tell me whether I am doing right."

"You will believe me, won't you?" he now pleaded more strongly. "I want a little sister too or I also am left all alone. Come, I'm not trying to deceive you, and I've left a nice home far north to tell you that I am your brother."

"You know everything," she spoke hesitatingly and half with herself. "You have brought back mother's watch and you know also about the bible and the necklace. The Indians stole my brother; you have clothes like they, and say also that you come from them."

"That God to Whom you just prayed has sent me to you at this hour," declared Max with tremulous voice and raised hand. "Our father and mother above are rejoicing that brother and sister have at last come together. Come," he concluded pleadingly, "they shall see us go through the world together."

The reference to heaven and his allusion to their common parentage by the use of "our", brought her holy soul to its resolution, made the call of like to like irresistible.

The last doubt vanished while her face lit up with childlike trust. "I am going to believe you," she declared, advancing fearlessly. "You must be my brother Max." Her ensuing words showed how the thirsting soul longed for an object upon which to lavish its tender affections. "I'm not afraid of you any more and I'm going to like you."

Max Gilbert had not dreamed the child would believe his almost unsupported word so quickly, a fact which made this first contact with the sweet sentiments of her youth all the more impressive and appreciated. "As long as the moon causes love," he broke forth as she placed her slender hand in his, "so long will I love you."

"I don't know just what that means, but I guess it's all right," she replied innocently. "My first name is Doree; you must call me by that name too."

With this they both seated themselves, Max in a capacious rocker, and Dorée on a foot-stool at his side. The first matter to be explained was of course the calamity which had so ruthlessly robbed them of their father. Her childlike mind could not fully grasp all the details preceding the death. Max could only surmise that it had some connection with their leaving the large mansion on Portage Ave.

The narration, though incoherently given by a grieving child, stirred the listener deeply, and taking his sister by the hand he crossed the room to gaze once more upon the dead. Then did the responsibility of being the sole protector of this innocent, most lovable child, come with its full seriousness upon the man from the northern wilds. He fancied the ashen face opened its eyes just for a moment to entreat his undying, fondest care of the orphan.

"Great Michabo!" he began, as a sudden solemnity came over him. "I swear that I will guard this child as long as there is life in my body. Who harms her, shall incur my everlasting vengeance; who befriends her, shall be my friend, and shall never ask aught of me in vain."

And by that oath began such a friendship between brother and sister as is seldom seen in this selfish, grasping world. Little also did he dream how far into the dim future would extend the effects of the solemn words.

With her blue eyes opened to the fullest, Dorée was vainly endeavoring to fathom the meaning of his strange actions. "You're a wonderful new brother," was all she could say as he came to the end.

We will pass over the description of many a weary argument, to say that after a long and difficult inquisition he finally convinced other hearers of his claim to be the long-lost brother of Doree Gilbert. The only heritage however which seemed to come from that title, was poverty; for after paying all lawful debts (and they were many), the Gilbert estate was found to be scarcely worth two hundred dollars.

Strangly enough the woman, who had first admitted him, and her husband, were the only visitors who paid any unselfish attention to them in their present calamity. Max Gilbert could in no wise account for the peculiar fact, until this same man, Mr. Dougan, yielded to his entreaties one night and explained the whole difficulty.

"Your father was once the most talked-of man in the city of Winnipeg," the lawyer—such was his profession—began with that calmness so natural to men of affairs. They were sitting at opposite ends of a table in the same room wherein the casket had first met Max's startled eyes. "At the time when my narration begins, your father lived in a stately mansion on Portage Ave. However, to come to the point, he was a bold inveterate speculator, which fact probably accounts for his early dabbling in insurance, a business that above all others, gives a man opportunity for the full display of original acumen, indomitable perseverance, and talents for management. First he assisted in the formation of the 'Northern Fire Insurance Co.' capitalized at \$200,000, but since their manager did not come up to expectations, the

shareholders after a year, offered your father the honorable position. He accepted, and by his restless energy and broad initiative proved in a short while that no more capable man could have been selected."

Leaning far over the table, Max Gilbert was following the story with intense interest. To one of his meager education, however, this introduction needed more detailed explanation, that he might fully grasp the important revelation which would surely follow.

"What is an insurance company?" he inquired, narrowing his gaze, "and what kind of a position is that which my father held?"

Then of course the lawyer had to go into many explanations of the insurance business.

At their conclusion, Max drew himself together sharply, as he remembered the broken trend of the conversation. "But what about the rest of the story?"

An evident look of distaste came upon the other's face. Did he already know his questioner well enough to foresee the only possible outcome? "At this time there was in Winnipeg only one man who enjoyed a popularity equal to your father's," he explained. "Adrian Chester—for such was his name—was in consequence nominated one December day as one of two to compete for the office of mayoralty." With the next sentence Dougan came out impressively and slowly. "His opponent was none other than your father. The candidates, both men of great energy, canvassed the city thoroughly, but as the day of election drew near, it became a silent understanding with the better informed class that your father would be returned the victor." Rubbing his chin a few times

he again proceeded. "No sooner did Adrian Chester recognize the turn of events, than his unscrupulous nature determined to overcome the difficulty whether by fair means or by foul. And he had the means," Dougan broke forth in husky tones, "for your father was one of the most—daring—inveterate—gamblers in the west."

Max Gilbert's eyes opened wide with astonishment and leaning far over the table he appeared to drink the words from the very lips of the speaker. "My father a gambler!" he exclaimed. "Did the whole city know the fact?"

"Outside of his immediate circle, I do not think that anyone besides Adrian Chester possessed the knowledge."

Dougan's listener was anxious to come to the climax. "Then how did this give Chester the means of ruining my father?"

The lawyer's head dropped on his breast perhaps the better to give him the opportunity of furtively watching the responsive emotions on the other's face. "The Saturday before the election," he asserted in measured tones, "Adrian Chester utilized every paper in the city to entirely reveal your father's dishonorable gambling habits. In addition, the various editors made capital of the allegation by lengthy comments from their own inventive pens. The whole city was astounded," he proceeded, livening to the topic with many a gesture. "With one voice, people and ministers arose to condemn this man who like another pharisee had paraded his honesty before them. Everlasting the disgrace to elect such a man to the

most honorable position in the city!" A short pause was made before the conclusion. "The election came to pass and your father received scarcely two hundred votes: Adrian Chester became the mayor of Winnipeg."

Thickening emotions like billows surged through the wrathful soul of Max Gilbert: unable to resist entirely their impetus, he would turn now to the right or to the left, or clench his fingers as if Chester were there in his grasp. Two sharp eyes shot living fire—the Dakotah was aroused.

"Go on," he urged hoarsely as the speaker paused for a moment, "tell the story to the disagreeable end."

"The effect of Chester's trick did not stop with the elections, for the fearing people now exclaimed that a gambler likewise was not to be trusted in the responsible position of manager of an insurance company where so much of their money lay at his mercy. Many a gambler had on an evil day embezzled company funds to draw himself out of a difficulty, and might not this man do the same?" Dougan shifted his corpulent body to a more comfortable position. "Broken-hearted, your father threw his whole strength against the impending tide: to rekindle confidence with the shareholders he used his last cent to take over \$50,000 worth of their stock; if money was to be lost, then he had thus placed himself to be the biggest loser. The members—you will remember that they are after all the company—could however in no way be influenced to retransfer their allegiance to your father. Fearing the evil day, they left the ranks so rapidly that very soon the company had dwindled to almost nothing.

There was but one way to prevent its utter dissolution—several months before the expiration of his term, your father resigned his position as manager of the tottering company, and sunk from that time into oblivion.”

“And what caused his death?” came abruptly from the listener.

“The doctor called it ‘complications,’” spoke Dougan slowly, “but I call it grief.”

“Where is—?” Max was about to inquire.

“After a minute I’ll answer,” interposed the lawyer. “Firstly, I would not wish you to disrespect your father because of this habit of gambling. Beyond this one fault, I know him to have been an honest, charitable, and upright man.”

“Where is this Adrian Chester?” came fiercely from the set teeth of the Dakota.

“In Ottawa: he moved there about six months after his term in the Mayor’s chair expired. Somehow he had obtained a domineering position among the shareholders, and since the ‘Northern’ was now utterly discredited in Winnipeg, he secured government leave to transfer the head-office to Ottawa. In a new home the company should flourish once more, and rich dividends flow into the pockets of the stockholders.”

“Then in my father’s name, I now have \$50,000 worth of shares in this company,” hazarded Max interestedly.

“Not at all, not at all,” corrected the other with a knowing smile. “When after his resignation your father needed ready cash rather than paper vouchers,

a secret agent of Chester's bought his shares for almost a song."

The listener's face became livid with anger; his teeth closed with a vengeful click as this new villainy of Chester's came to his knowledge. "Then this is the man who ruined my father and robbed him of his honor," he ruminated grimly while his massive lungs moved deeply with the emotions of his soul. "I believe that after some little training in the business world, I will myself take to this insurance work," he proceeded, looking insinuatingly across the table. "The ambitions of the father are perhaps not too difficult for the son. The world must know that a Gilbert can be trusted even with the largest sums of money." His words were low yet spoken with that latent strength which shows invincible determination. "Chester and I may meet again: yes, we will meet again; my course eventually lies towards the city of Ottawa. My ignorance with business may require slow training, but the resolution remains—eventually to Ottawa."

After a lengthy conversation which pertained chiefly to the matter in hand, the lawyer arose for his departure. "I have many reasons to be grateful to your father," he concluded, grasping Max Gilbert's hand. "If ever you should need my services, trust me, they are yours gratis."

* * * *

"What will we do now?" asked Dorce one night several weeks after the funeral.

"I have talked the matter over with Mr. Dougan

and his wife," responded her brother, "and we have formed a plan which needs only your consent."

"Sure, I'll consent," she broke forth spontaneously. "I'll always do whatever you wish."

"You are just a young girl," continued Max. "On that account Mrs. Dougan thought you should go to school a few more years."

"Papa always said that too," she assented sweetly.

"How would you like to go to a sisters' school?"

"You mean an academy," she corrected. "That would be just fine." Here she paused to debate a question which had suddenly risen before her youthful mind. "But one of the neighbors told me that papa left very little money," she finished with a faint inflection.

"We'll get the money for you," her brother responded cheerfully. "I myself will go to the Ottawa lumber camps where I'll soon earn enough money to pay for your schooling." The last sentence was uttered with a significant emphasis that was of course not at all noticed by the youthful girl.

"Couldn't you be some great man?" she suggested. "Wouldn't it be nicer if you lived in some big house and I cooked for you?"

"Your's is the best idea yet," he smiled. "Before we live in that big house however, we'll have to make a clever lady of you. After you've been in school a few years, we'll move into the big house."

"All right, Max," she answered innocently. "We'll wait then."

As for Max, he resumed his buckskin attire and accompanied by Fire Sticks turned his steps towards

the lumber camps of the Ottawa. That was "east" and eastward lay the capital of the Dominion where flourished the "Northern" over which his father had once been manager—where lived Adrian Chester, the man who had ruined his father.

CHAPTER THREE.

FOR JOY NOT EDIFICATION.

How gladly the habitants gathered around the fire those nights when the chimneys whistled, the winds hooted, the snows pelted, and the drowsy dogs whimpered as they tried to bury their noses still deeper beneath their shaggy fur. Then the children sat on the large wood-box, eating butternuts, or drew fantastic figures on the frost-clad window panes; while the older folks pulled their chairs to the fire, and spun yarns from the land of truth, from the land of hazy probability, and from the land of ———, just to make each other forget the cold.

A straggling village lay in darkness. Its unreasonable position in that particular place on the Ottawa river might have as much significance as one more snowball on a glacier, or an ordinary pebble on an uninteresting hillside. But there it was on this night when the thermometer registered thirty degrees below zero, and the lumber jacks in the tavern gave their meteorological opinion as "damn cold."

A tall muscular figure bearing what seemed a dog under one arm and a gun in the other, strode from the encircling gloom and with rapid loping step made towards the tavern. Setting his gun against the building, he opened the door. Two oil lamps suspended from the ceiling dimly supplied the yellow light for the square room in which he now found him-

self. To his left stood a box-stove heated to a red glow; while at the further end of the room was ranged the bar that protected the disorderly shelf of liquors from the too fond customers, at present five lumber jacks in a more or less fuddled state of mind.

The newcomer did not concern himself very much with their surprised stares, but placing his dog beside the stove, left the room for a moment, to reappear with a large handful of snow. He evidently feared that his faithful companion had been frost-bitten for he at once began to chafe his legs, nor did he desist until the whimpers of the canine gave evidence that the ministrations were having the desired effect.

"Guess he's an Indian," suggested one of the rougher jacks, smacking his lips to a generous potation of malt whiskey.

"You have a wonderful head, Frenchy," commented the young leader, Dick Kildare, swaying towards the spokesman. "You can—hic—tell the difference between an Indian and an elephant without half thinking. Your educational course must have been a long one."

"He must be cold," ventured another with a bushy mustache.

"You Frenchmen are the cleverest race on earth," chaffed the youth with rising hilarity while he stepped back in feigned astonishment. "Now such a brilliant remark when it's about thirty degrees below zero, proves that with a little training you could become the light of the present century. Both of you fellows should be teaching. If you couldn't get a

position at the first university, try the penitentiary."

Then turning in a rather dazed condition to a third riverman who with large apprehending eyes was devouring the contents behind the bar, he asked with rousing inflection, "Baptiste, what wise suggestion can you lay before the assembly as to the identity of this individual who has thus intruded himself upon our edifying circle?"

"Well," answered Baptiste, awakening from his sublime meditation, "I guess the other fellows have said about everything, so we better have a drink."

Dick fell back in wonderment. Falling indeed was better suited to his present condition than a precise military advance. "Baptiste," he declared, throwing one arm over the bar for support, "you're bright enough to be the father of this whole family of educators. Your intelligence is so wonderful that you could undoubtedly spell 'cat' without making any more than three mistakes."

Baptiste had seemingly paid no attention to the sarcasms of the youthful orator, but had utilized the time to survey the massive form of the stranger. "He be a powerful man," he now whispered, jerking his thumb towards the crouching figure. "He would be a bad man to make angry."

"Not at all, not at all," corrected Dick debonairly. "You haven't heard of the day I almost whipped a man of that size. Well, I almost gave him a left upper-cut; then I almost met him on the eye; then I almost met him on the jaw—then I almost got killed."

A hearty guffaw answered the witticism, and five empty glasses again stood on the counter.

Dick Kildare's carriage with these rough lumbermen might indeed seem somewhat precocious, did we not understand how by his innumerable stories, dashing appearance, and very faults, he had become such an object of love to them, as to make pardonable even more caustic raillery.

The stranger advanced towards the group. "Where did you get that dog?" questioned Dick, taking a rather unsteady position before him.

"I and the dog came many moons together," answered the other unconsciously lapsing into a certain former manner of speech.

"You and the moon should both be under a feather-bed on such a cold night as this," returned Dick dryly. "Come, take a little whiskey to warm you up."

"Thank you, I do not drink," answered the stranger with quiet determination, at the same time taking a stately position to one side of the group.

Dick opened his eyes, this time in veritable surprise. "You're the first Indian who ever refused a drink in the western hemisphere," he burst forth. Then assuming the deportment of an auctioneer, he again addressed the jacks. "Come up, boys, gaze upon the eighth wonder. Come, bid high; we're selling out of this kind. They're too rare for our common assortment; must positively be sold today."

Dick approached the stranger confidentially. "Are you really an Indian?" he questioned more subdued. "You have something whitish about you; in fact, you're all white but those heathenish clothes of yours."

"No, I'm not an Indian," answered the other with a dignity above their bantering.

"Shake hands, partner," exclaimed Dick starting forward. "Many persons are not what they seem. Neither was I always what I seem. I was once a—hic. No, I wasn't a—hic. I was once the leader of a college in New York state, but had to clear out. Notice that—hic, chief; it's a new adjective in the language, although lords and senators have used it already for centuries." The speaker's condition was rapidly becoming maudlin, but still the workings of a discursive intellect could not be held in check. "After leaving, chief, I came to the—hic Ottawa river. See how that adjective came in there again: its use was perfectly proper because the river is always full. Been—hic having a glorious time ever since, better than college days." Wearying of the autobiography, he turned to drain his glass of malt whiskey.

"Are you going back to the camp?" asked Max, grasping the other's arm to draw his attention. "If there is any chance of obtaining work there, I would like very much to go with you."

Bleary-eyed Dick reeled towards him. "Sure, chief, plenty of work. I'm going back soon. I've got the boss's two horses and a bob-sleigh. I'll give you the fastest ride you ever had." After a short pause, he continued more confidentially. "Before you strike camp, you better throw off that Indian garb; all the jacks work in full-dress suits and patent leather boots."

The remaining rivermen yielding to the languor subsequent to a carousal had already ensconced themselves in the capacious chairs ranged everywhere about

the room: the vivacity of their young leader alone seemed inexhaustible. Singing was still a noisy amusement that did not require the assistance of others, and into this accomplishment Dick now digressed. A naturally sweet voice was however of no avail, for by this time his mental faculties were in such dire mutiny that they refused utterly to work in their natural and logical order. Some ideas came too quickly and others too slowly, so that a ludicrous jumble was often the result: sacred songs were ended with Bachanalian choruses, while other ditties roamed over many continents for their incongruous subject matter; the "last rose of summer" grew on a glacier's icy top, whereas Annie Laurie passed through a graded metamorphosis that finally left her on the banks of the river Rhine, gloriously singing, "How dry I am."

"Chief," he declared, coming to a sudden pause without caring to extricate "Old Black Joe" from ancient Tara's halls, "look at these unappreciative Frenchmen—all fast asleep. I refuse to waste my sweetness on the desert air. Bartender, bring around my regal conveyance."

Two gaunt horses formed the kinetic energy of that "bob-sleigh", as Dick chose to call it. For the occupants a bear-skin thrown across the frame constituted the only difference from sitting on a picket fence. Max Gilbert took the seat with his dog on his lap and prepared to make the best of it. There was a Sioux whoop from Dick, a crack on each horse's back and they disappeared in the cold and almost impenetrable darkness.

The whip again cut through the frosty air, and forward leaped the gaunt team. So fast did they go that often the little bob-sleigh was raised completely off the ground. Had it not been for this bumping and jolting as they passed over the drifts, both would undoubtedly have been frozen. To his dying day Max Gilbert could never understand how the befuddled guide ever held to his seat. Thus five and five very long miles were covered until there came a "Whoa!"—and a mischievous laugh from the driver. One shivering figure could scarcely believe the news.

Emerging from the forest gloom before him, stood a small shanty typical of those days when every man was his own carpenter, and the woods felt not the loss of a hundred timbers. It was the head office, cabin and kitchen of camp No. 4, belonging to the rich Ottawa lumber dealer, J. E. D. Astor.

A strange friend was discovered.

The son of a ruined father had attained his temporary destination—this was East.

CHAPTER FOUR.

INTO THE TROUBLED CURRENT.

"You may hand me a cigar, too, Mr. Thompson," began Max Gilbert.

"But I thought you never smoked," queried the district agent. "You wouldn't even look at a cigar during your first winter in the camp."

The box of perfectos was handed the former riverman and one selected. "The straitened circumstances of those days compelled that course," he answered, cutting off the end. "Things have changed though, so there is no reason why I shouldn't return to the habit. Smoking is so inseparably connected with the Dakota life that it has really been a very hard struggle for me to give it up."

The above conversation was carried on in the office of James Thompson the district agent of the Northern Fire Insurance Company; this position is with most concerns held to be second in importance only to that of the manager. The leading official in the present instance was none other than the quondam Dakota's hated enemy, Adrian Chester.

The main objective of Max Gilbert's journey eastward had never been lost sight of. The whole of the first winter had of course been spent in the lumber camps of the Ottawa, since lack of knowledge of the white man's ways precluded his too premature entry into the business arena. No sooner was the spring

drive completed however than he made his first attempts in that direction. Whether it was fortunate or not we cannot say, but one of the first men he met in Ottawa was the Thompson mentioned in the preceding paragraph. This man took an immediate liking to the strange admixture of white man and Indian; he listened attentively to his tale of wrongs done; he encouraged his ambition. Apart even from that, his perspicacity at once detected qualities in the candidate which would by nature eventually make him an important figure in the financial arena. In short Max Gilbert became the protege of the district agent, and since natural abilities were here strengthened by motives of revenge, he made such marvelous progress as to astound even the expectations of his applauding teacher.

The first training was to extend only eight months. Dorec's academy course was necessarily somewhat expensive, and Max had therefore to return to the camp for the winter where he could earn more remunerative wages. Then it was back again to the city for his second attempt.

And how did his first meeting with his enemy result? What were his first impressions of Adrian Chester? Perhaps Max made a mistake, for at the introduction his eyes gleamed too unnaturally to be mistaken for friendship; it made Chester wonder at first which sentiment was through the later frequent meetings changed into a strange, inexplicable misgiving. Again the description of the attorney in Winnipeg had not at all been overdone. The manager was proud, intolerant, harsh, and autocratic.

Max discovered his superior's true nature only when he took up the work of canvassing. Contact with clients, actual and prospective, showed him how much Chester was retarding the progress of the company. Several times therefore Max hinted at reforms only to be rebuked with the statement, "that's the way it suits me and that should also be enough for any agent!" Why should Adrian Chester have such dominant sway in a position which after all might still be occupied by the elder Gilbert if it had not been for that trick of old? And now must the son become a menial of this usurper?

If the manager did not appreciate the efforts of the new agent, the people did not take long to discover his sterling qualities. Accustomed to the capricious dealings of incompetent officials backed up by the harsh will of Chester, they now experienced the pleasanter methods of one who never offended them but good or bad luck attending, always bore himself as a perfect gentleman. Possessing a wonderfully sweet voice he could gain an attentive hearing even from the most ill-disposed. Then the modesty that concealed his strength could not help but in time gain the recognition and respect of the populace.

Max Gilbert had helped with two spring drives, and worked two summers as agent, when the conversation which begins this chapter, took place.

"So you would like to see several changes made in the 'Northern'," drawled Thompson very knowingly as he tapped his fingers on the desk. "As a fact you wish ultimately to oust Adrian Chester from his posi-

tion as manager." He raised his eyebrows to look squarely at the man opposite.

"My ultimate intentions I cannot disclose," was the response, "but would I not have a full right for such a desire?"

"We'll not discuss the morality of your wishes," responded Thompson pensively, "but you're ambitious, Max Gilbert, very, very ambitious."

"I would not call it ambition but rather a lawful striving after justice."

Thompson did not appear to have heard the rejoinder. Now he leaned forward impressively, "You may count on my assistance in any step you take which is within the law."

"Thank you," was the other's simple response.

"I also have no very great reasons to be friendly with Chester and his satellite, Fink," continued Thompson unheedingly. "For seven years they have disregarded my wishes on their board simply because the other directors were entirely under Chester's influence."

"Then why not break up this clique?" came hotly from Max. "This is the very matter which I had intended to discuss with you this morning."

Since the appointment of the manager devolved upon the directorate, it can easily be seen how logical was the question. If Max Gilbert hoped ultimately to expel Chester from the stolen office, he must first have directors on the board who would not fear incurring the manager's enmity.

Thompson opened his eyes wide. "And what then, Max Gilbert, what then?"

His listener either was nonplussed or did not care to come out with his answer.

"I know," Thompson himself answered, still keeping his alert position. "You're built to be a manager; your talents are such that you cannot be satisfied with anything less than a position of absolute command in the business world. The motive power in you is strong, and your mental endowments fully support your ambitions. And you have entered a business which will give you every opportunity to show of what stuff you are made."

There was a long pause between the two friends. "Suppose we get back to the topic of yesterday," at length continued Thompson. "Surely the intervening time of reflection has been ample to enable you to come to a decision."

"You mean the matter of my relieving you of the district agency?" queried Max very interestedly.

"Yes, to carry out your schemes—and they have my fullest approval—you should really have a more dominant position in the company. Many of the big policy-holders have known of my desire to resign for some time and without exception they have recommended you for the vacancy."

"I certainly appreciate the honor only I dislike to replace an old friend," declared the other.

"Then it's settled," announced Thompson in his own decisive way. "Of late years the burden of age has seriously handicapped me in the performance of my work. To-day therefore I carry out my desires, and resign in favor of Max Gilbert; all you need to take over the work, is Chester's consent."

His listener looked sharply at him.

"You need make no objections," continued Thompson knowingly, "for necessity will make me insist. Henceforth you will have complete sway in Ottawa and Hull—make the best of it," he concluded generously.

"But you'll not sever all connections with the 'Northern'," protested Max in amazement.

"No, not while you are it's official," was the kind response. "I'll still remain a director to give you any assistance possible." Thompson looked out of the window. "There's a team coming down the lane; is that for you?"

"Yes, my old employer, Astor, met me on the street yesterday to inform me of some trouble they were having with a jam, and asked me at the same time if I could not assist them for a day. Because business is not so very pressing at this time of the year, I consented, and indeed that's the reason of the man coming down the lane."

"Very well then, you tend to the jam and I'll see to this little business affair; a short letter tendering my resignation, and also informing him that I had resigned in your favor, will be sufficient." Thompson smiled as his friend rose for his departure. "Only do not let the splash of the Ottawa make you forget the mightier splash still to come in the insurance world."

"I'll not forget," answered the Dakotah dreamily. "It will be like the struggle between the thunder-bird and the god of waters for the command of the nation."

* * * *

It was two days later. Adrian Chester sat in the

well furnished offices of the 'Northern'. Perhaps twenty opened letters lay on a table beside the manager. Now however he had come to one which had evidently elicited his deep surprise. "Rather unexpected," he muttered. Once more he read the letter, then raised his dark eyebrows comprehensively. "Thompson is indeed getting old," he reflected further, "but why does he desire to still remain a director?"—Another pause.—"Max Gilbert again!" came now more vindictively. "It's Max Gilbert all the time. Max Gilbert is too ambitious." Sullenly he pushed the letter away from him. "How I hate that man," he concluded savagely.

For fully five minutes the manager remained buried in thought until the illuminating expression of his countenance evidenced the solution of the difficulty. "Fink! Fink!" he called more brightly to his secretary in the next compartment.

"Yes," responded the satellite appearing in the door. "What's the matter?"

Chester had in the meantime entirely composed himself. "Take a seat, Fink, and read this letter."

"So, so," muttered Fink wisely as he came to the end. "Somebody is evidently trying to force his way into the very offices of the 'Northern'."

"Perhaps," was the manager's only comment, though he seemed strangely jubilant. "Gilbert is rising in the world."

Fink was not so composed. "I can't understand the present trend of affairs at all," he protested angrily. "Everywhere you go it's nothing but 'Gilbert, Gilbert' all the day. Not even you seem to have anything to

say now although you are the biggest shareholder. Go to any part of Ottawa and especially to Hull, every one talks admiringly of the new agent. Scarcely in the business four years, he is already aspiring to the general agency." He paused for a while still fingering the script. Then he looked up distractedly. "What'll you do; refuse Thompson's request?"

"He is a good man for the position," affirmed Chester sardonically. "What motives lie behind this move I do not yet understand. Prudence however counsels me to give some consideration to Thompson's wishes. Though I have not paid much attention to him as a director, I must acknowledge his position as a former district agent. What would you do in the matter, Fink?" he concluded calmly while he smiled upon the other man.

"I'd refuse to recognize Thompson's petition," answered the other gesticulating excitedly. "If he wishes to resign, accept his resignation: the appointment of a successor depends not upon him but upon you as the manager of the company; it is your privilege to select whomsoever you desire. I'd quickly appoint someone other than Max Gilbert," he concluded, averting his gaze doggedly.

Now Chester finally became serious and in his answer we almost feel that he pities the weaker mind before him. "Not so fast, Fink, not so fast," cautioned the abler financier. "If you refuse, Thompson will nominally remain the general agent while practically turning over all his work and authority to Max Gilbert."

.

"I see, I see," said the other, always quick to agree with his superior.

Chester laughed again. "With all your money and pretension, Mr. Fink, you have not yet learned the game of finance." The secretary silently took the rebuke. "What's the harm in making him general agent; refuse him and you must argue with two?" Only an occasional mutter of satisfaction came from Fink as Chester's brilliant thinking dawned upon him. The president resumed. "Thompson is indeed still a director but I have too many friends on that board to fear him. Therefore, let Max Gilbert be our general agent."

Still the minor official desired to have a point cleared up. "And what will you do with Gilbert after he has put the company on a solid basis?"

Chester came to his feet. "Crush him, crush him," he declared fiercely while the thump of his fist made several pens fall from the holder.

Even the unscrupulous parasite was taken aback by such vindictiveness. "Why?" he asked, wonderingly.

"Because we hate each other although I could not give you any great reason for the feeling; because we had a natural hatred for each other from the very first. For lack of a reason, suffice it that this man has pestered me day after day with talk of reform, has filled the minds of the people with promises of new by-laws that now they will consider me a fossil if I do not consent. Heretofore my word and even sentiment was law; to-day they look to Gilbert for their ideas." Once more he knocked on the table. "Yes,

58 INTO THE TROUBLED CURRENT.

we'll use him ; then we'll crush him." His consequent smile showed how much such sentiments had become part of his very nature. "You'd better come to lunch with me, Fink, where we'll further discuss our little difficulty."

CHAPTER FIVE.

TARRYING A WEЕ.

But what had Max Gilbert, this Indian, this agent, this riverman, done in the meantime on the Ottawa? We see him again as emerging from the woods to the right, he stops for a moment to inhale the crisp spring air, then turns with elastic step at a sharp angle towards the river. What a magnificent specimen of manhood is this once Dakotah! With face bent reflectively on the ground he had nearly covered the clearance when chancing to look up he beheld a sight which filled him with the greatest wonderment. On the pinnacle of a skid-way that rose to a height of twenty feet stood a young girl of wondrous and striking beauty. Involuntarily the phrase formed in his startled mind, "fresh as a rose, fresh as a rose". The ermine stole and long coat of rich embroidery betokened wealth, but that face with its youth and again its pure youth, its health and life and all so enticingly natural—had the balmy spring breezes suddenly given birth to an airy, fairy, offspring?

Her slender body inclined forward slightly as she scanned the Ottawa's broad expanse; then she stepped to the end of the crowning log probably to obtain a still better view.

Brushing back a wanton ringlet of hair, she bent her slender body more eagerly forward to interpret the meaning of a very lively scene about five hundred

feet up the river. Max could obtain only a partial view of her contracted brow as she puzzled vainly with the difficulty. In a minute she abandoned the thought, then turned about to behold the stalwart figure of the staring riverman.

The position was difficult for one not very much accustomed to women. No, he could not pass on without a word, for somehow she seemed to ask the reason of his rather awkward position. Then again, what could he say or do? His experience with the feminine sex was so limited that he could only show ineptitude for gentle speech or action. But there was something so romantic about this apparition. No, it was too rare to permit of summary dismissal. Then he had not yet heard her voice, had not yet obtained a close enough view of a beauty that must be ravishing.

"Good afternoon!" greeted Max Gilbert hesitatingly while he advanced to the base of the rollway.

"Good afternoon!" she nodded graciously. In a moment she had recovered herself and descended from her elevated position. Lithely and quickly she stepped from log to log, then stood before Max as if to say, "What next?"

"You were inspecting our wild home?" began Max rather to make her point the conversation. His three years amongst his own had already given him a remarkable fluency in the language.

"Yes, I've long desired to behold the picturesque home of the riverman at closer range," she explained in the subdued tones of a stranger. Then her eyes sparkled with life while an upraised hand grasped

tightly showed the inward feelings. "There is something so fresh, so original, so exhilarating about the life that compared to the city, it is as the vibrant air of the mountain top to the swooning air of the lowland."

"How brightly the large eyes flashed from their intelligent depths!" thought Max Gilbert. Somehow her spontaneity had relieved him of all embarrassment. And now he found himself saying in his heart, "fresher than a rose, far more delicate!"

"Can I be of any service to you?" he queried. He didn't think of the probability that she would not dare to enter this wild domain without the company of a very trusty guide.

For a long time she had desired to talk to a real riverman and here was her opportunity. She turned her youthful eyes to the right and left as if searching for her lost guide. "Thank you," she answered timidly, "You can at least explain the cause of that commotion up the river." After all, he was just a page from some bright picture book.

"For a better view then, we'll ascend to the crowning log of that rollway," he advised tentatively.

"Crowning log, and rollway!" she muttered happily. "Already two new terms!"

"Oh!" she breathed rapturously when they had attained the summit, "I'll never need a doctor again,"

With such spirit, it is small wonder that she had finally influenced her father to take her up the river.

"The camp is in serious danger of being swamped," explained Max, looking with greater concern towards

the north. "Thousands of feet of timber may be swept away within the next three hours."

The visitor feared she was trespassing on his time. "Isn't your assistance needed?"

"Not for a half hour; until that time the dynamiters alone are needed. But to explain, four rollways gave way several hours ago to send their massive logs crunching into a last stretch of ice at this point of the river. Unable to break through the entire length the logs formed a jam with the ice. Every minute thickens the jam—"

"How delightful!" interrupted the excited listener.

The strong man looked at her quizzically for a moment, smiled and continued. "If the lumberjacks cannot dislodge the jam a flood will be upon us before many hours, sweeping away the camp buildings and four million feet of timber banked up at this point, not to speak of many a rollway which would be broken further down the river."

"Oh!" came a remark more quietly. Somebody understood that not everything at that moment was "delightful".

Two large inquiring eyes turned towards him. "How will you overcome the difficulty?"

"We must endeavor to break the jam with dynamite," came the answer while a slight gesture bade her again to descend the rollway.

"See," he pointed out as they stood on solid ground. "One charge will be placed in the middle and another at the far end. I hope it succeeds," he finished seriously.

A short, thick-set man was walking towards them;

his complexion was rather sallow and his hair, eyebrows and small mustache very black.

The girl watched her companion as his attention was drawn away by the approaching figure; she saw surprised recognition flash over his face and then hatred, and the most intense loathing.

Every trace of feeling however had vanished as he again turned towards her.

"What is that man to you?" he inquired with forced carelessness.

"They call him my father," she answered with disturbed wonderment.

"Adrian Chester your father!" he gasped with ill-concealed interest.

Somehow those few remarks had made the situation strained and serious.

The greeting between the two men was most strange; both apparently tried to force a glad sentiment but failed miserably in the attempt.

"I stopped this man," explained Flavia, trying to relieve the straitened situation, "in order to ask him a few questions."

Max tipped his oilskin cap smilingly. "Your father will further explain the many interesting details I have not had time to touch upon. Good-day, Miss Chester; Good-day, Mr. Chester. My help is probably needed at the jam."

"What is that man's name?" asked Flavia after they had in silence covered the greater part of the distance to the jam.

"Max Gilbert," gruffly replied her father still looking on the ground.

Her youthful mind was not yet satisfied. "While we were walking here I heard so many call him 'chief', father; is he the captain over these rivermen?"

The following explanation he tried to bring out more civilly. "Nobody knows from where he comes; because of the Indian garb in which he first appeared on the river, many think he had Indian blood in his veins, and hence the title 'chief'."

The entry of another figure upon the scene again elicited her wonderment. "What a youthful face to see in such a wilderness!" she exclaimed, turning to her father. "That young man would be more in his element with a group of college students."

"Enter Dick with flourish of trumpets," quoted the one referred to who was none other than the youth who had first introduced Max Gilbert into the wilds.

"We must begin blasting operations at once," interrupted one who must have been the foreman. "You'll have to lend a hand, Dick: Francois will set his fuse at the rear and to the south, while you will do the same at the center."

"Yours but to command," answered Dick with a bow. "You fully appreciate my heroic nature." He liked to be waggish when every one else was serious. "Little Dick will now make big thunder. Ugh!"

The foreman smiled. "Go ahead: I'll give my commands from the shore."

The two men clambered over the icy pile. For a few minutes they worked patiently with their peaveys to dislodge obstructing blocks and otherwise to render the charge more effective.

Then Max Gilbert's voice could be heard above the

din: he was calling to Dick. "I'll set a couple of cartridges near the shore, Dick; place your own charge under the wall of ice and nearer to its edge."

"All right," answered Dick, hurriedly inserting six cartridges. "I will now expose my noble life to even greater dangers. So long."

"Take it seriously," cried Max in return. "This operation will be very dangerous."

"I couldn't for a minute. It would bring on brain trouble," and whistling he worked on.

Suddenly a shrill female voice pierced the air with its anguished cry, "It's breaking: they'll be killed," cried Flavia Chester, running like a frightened fawn nearer to the bank.

Max Gilbert was intently working only a few feet away when startled by that call and following her gaze, he beheld a narrow ridge of ice the whole width of the river, rapidly disintegrating itself from the icy wall.

"Dick! Dick!" he immediately shouted without thinking of his own danger. "Dive into the water and keep ahead of the ice."

The turbulent waters of the center, however, completely deafened the shrill voice of the girl as also the warning advice of Max Gilbert.

Suddenly the block upon which the young man was supporting himself, was shot forward like a projectile from a catapult, throwing him headlong into the icy water. As a hundred ponderous masses followed simultaneously, Dick with the proverbial instinct of the drowning man, flung out both arms for support; the left came between the vengeful grip of two heavy

blocks, and on being released fell like a limp weight to his side; a deathly faintness tried to overcome him, but again did this peculiar instinct tell him his uninjured arm had struck upon something solid; every weakening faculty sent forth the cry, "hold tight", and he clasped it with all his might. It was only for a moment however that this enervation lasted, and he opened his eyes to find himself clinging to one of the many hundred blocks of ice that with as many logs were rapidly floating towards the rapids below.

For the first moment Flavia Chester was rooted to the spot, and an agonized countenance and large staring eyes alone spoke the fear her lips could not describe. The ermine stole lost, her hair dishevelled, almost wild in appearance, the daughter of the city had suddenly become one with the tragedy of the rude elements.

"Can't you help him?" called the anguished girl to Max, as she recognized him only a few feet away. Her body was bent forward as if to force help from this only source. "See, how his arm is hanging lifelessly in the water; it's broken; he'll drown."

Not even a glance rewarded her entreaty.

Chester had followed his daughter up the bank. "Gilbert should have taken charge of the center and not left such a stripling take the most dangerous part."

Though annoyed at this unjust criticism, the daughter gave no sign of having heard.

"See how faint his head hangs over the block," came her remark. "He must be unconscious. The rapids!

the rapids!" she repeated with greater alarm. "It's death, sure death."

The foreman and every big hearted riverman were already aware of the danger that threatened their jovial Dick and not a moment was lost in attempting means of rescue. Several—they didn't know just why they did it—essayed to swim the now seething river but the hundreds of icy blocks which churned the waters into foam, rendered such endeavors entirely futile.

As for the "chief", though fully aware of the threatening danger and of the personal appeal of the creature beside him, he still stood motionless upon the shore. He had heard, had felt her appeal and therefore did he pray to a strange god that a miracle might happen.

Again that tremulous female voice pointed to a new cause for alarm.

A heavy timber was rushing upon Dick from the rear and would in a few minutes crush him against the block of ice with the force of a battering ram.

"He'll be killed!" Once more the "chief" felt an appealing glance from her restless eyes. "He'll be killed!"

The youth in the water had himself become cognizant of the new danger, and as it was utterly impossible for him to swim while the broken arm racked his body with pain, hero that he was, he calmly turned about half-way and prepared to meet his death—it was the rule of the North.

Dismay at their own helplessness had quieted the

hundred voices on the shore. All were silent; they were face to face with death.

Then at last did a plan dawn upon the calculating mind of the "chief".

"Back there to the shore!" came in a stentorian voice from a simple riverman but with such innate power of command that none dared to disobey. "Back, I say!"

Then did Max Gilbert, holding a long peavey, like a balancing pole, run down the bank and jumping on the first block of ice, spring lightly but mightily from one to the other, always directing his course to where his youthful friend was facing such imminent danger.

"How will he save him?" breathed the girl on the shore.

The chain of ice, no matter how certain its footing, could still not bring the powerful riverman nearer than twenty-five feet to Dick, and, before he could swim that intervening distance, the onrushing log must surely be upon the youth. Max Gilbert had often distinguished himself with wonderful feats of agility, but never had they seen such a sight, as now he leaped mightily from block to block, over distances that seemed insuperable, sinking to his knees for a second, then rising again, and ever making his way to the one in danger.

"Hold tight, Dick," came in a gasp from his set teeth as he neared the end of the chain.

Flavia Chester did not breathe; the "chief" had arrived at the last block; his actions were a mystery to her. Then she saw him, with spear poised strongly

before him, make a great almost superhuman leap into the air to dart like an arrow over the watery space.

"Heavens!" thought Chester in the brief interval as the man hung suspended in mid-air, "he'll pierce the youth's head with that instrument. Rash fool!" Even in the presence of danger, he could criticize the "chief".

That he was aiming the sharp point at the block supporting Dick, was a truth that flashed simultaneously upon the minds of all, and Chester was not alone with his doubts.

There was however a strong arm behind that steel, a man who in a far northern country had earned the name of Flying Arrow. The waters below gurgled greedily about their victim; the rescuer steadies every nerve to meet this greatest crisis of his life; a pike pole is grasped with a deathlike grip; two eyes stare wildly as the flying panther's when the instrument with a terrible shock strikes the block supporting the imperiled youth.

Now the method of rescue is evident to all, for so great was the impact of the pole, made even stronger by the weight of its muscular holder, that Dick's block is shoved fully ten feet to one side and out of the line of danger.

"He's saved," cried the girl, in deep relief, as if the rescue were complete. But, no, in a moment her eyes were again upon the river to watch the progress of another struggle. The impact of spear and block had been so great that both Max Gilbert and the young man were thrown into the foaming icy water.

"See, father," she continued, retreating and now

nervously advancing, "he has gripped the young man's coat in his teeth and is swimming backwards with all his might—he seems to be in a clear channel—how the water splashes over both—he's gone—no, they are still swimming—they're nearing the shore—they're saved—what a wonderful rescue!"

"It's time to go home," observed Adrian Chester. "Wait here till I bring around the buggy."

A cheer greeted the riverman as dripping with water he carried the almost lifeless form across the wall of ice. Four jacks came forward to relieve him of his burden and bring Dick into the log shanty.

The girl came weakly towards the big, tall, brave man. "That was a brave deed." Her large eyes were gazing with confident admiration into his strong countenance. "I did not think it was possible."

Her congratulations annoyed him. "Thank you, miss, but those are very ordinary occurrences on the river."

"Oh!"—a pause—"Can I be of any assistance?" she queried softly then and with a slight flush.

"Dick must not expect such tender care: you would be repelled by the unpolished prose of it all."

Then he took what must be his last look upon this face so radiant with youth and beauty; what a pure, highly wrought soul was reflected in the chaste, youthful, dainty tinted face; what delightful scenes of repose, calm, and ethereal happiness did it conjure up before his thirsting imagination!

No, he was ashamed of such dreaming; the pause had been inexcusably long.

He was spared a refusal of her proffered assist-

ance by a halloo from the buggy. "Come, Flavia, we must return," called Chester. "It's getting very late."

Perhaps it was due to the exciting events of the afternoon, but for a long while as they were driving over the forest road both father and daughter preserved a profound silence. A question of Flavia's at last gave her father the opportunity of relieving himself of a very oppressive sentiment.

"What do you know about this strange man they call 'chief'?" she asked innocently. "Why do you act so strangely towards one another?"

"Flavia, I cannot just explain the reason of it all, for as far as I am concerned my sentiments are altogether involuntary," he replied in puzzled accents. "It is still stranger because during the last two summers the man has been employed as agent in my insurance company; this river work was only temporary with him because of the greater salary in connection. For one engaged in the business such a short time, he has acquired a most comprehensive knowledge of insurance." And now the real cause of the worry was brought forth: his voice was almost husky as he turned to his daughter. "When he first entered my employment as agent, I several times discovered him staring at me in a manner which told of the most deep-seated hatred. Of late he seems to have more control over himself so that I have seen no such manifestations for a long time. But, Flavia," concluded the man with the haunted memory, "I think he has some very vengeful purpose to his life. He is a master among men, and I fear for his enemy."

To return to the jam, five more charges had to be

placed before the desired effect was produced. Then a large piece of ice in the center shoved its nose high into the air, to be followed in a moment by a cracking like rifle-shots as a hundred other icy blocks tilted their sharp edges skywards. One piece shot from its vicelike grip, another fell, when with an incessant rumbling, tumbling, tearing, and grinding, the ponderous mass began its disintegration: soon the whole width of the river was transformed into a panorama of frenzied force, as in the van ice leaped upon ice in its mad fury to beat to the front; swiftly one thousand blocks like monstrous, snorting, blowing, white whales ploughed through the water, lashed it into foam, and sent its spray like geysers into the air.

Then when at dusk the sight beautiful had come to an end, Max Gilbert secured his first opportunity to see his injured friend.

"Well, Dick," he began, upon entering the lantern-lit room, "you're looking rather pale."

"Carried unanimously," answered the young man, edging about for a more comfortable position in his berth, "although bathing in a cold river has often been recommended to bring back the flush to the withered cheek. It might have worked here too only the stage hands were not overcareful about the setting: had they removed the river, everything might have gone well." He became serious. "Say, chief, a thousand thanks for saving my life.—There, there, don't look out of the window; there's nothing to see out there anyway but nothing."

"Just a little excitement," returned Max disinterestedly, referring to the incident of the afternoon.

"Excitement!" broke in Dick. "Perhaps; but I'd prefer nice tepid water for such out-door fun: yes, the nurse should first feel if it's not too cold for her darling."

Dick rested himself on his healthy arm to gaze pensively upon the chief's face. "Who was the young lady to whom you were talking this afternoon?"

"Did you see her too?" asked Max with a glimmer of interest.

"I did: I scanned, surveyed, gazed and stared with an occasional addition of much pensiveness, whatever that means." His poetic imagination brought flame to the thought and made him seem alone with the picture. "She was like a flower thrown by some mighty hand far over the trees to drop in the center of this wild forest. Her chief, was a ——— beautiful color; her eyes were very ——— beautiful, while her walk was simply ——— beautiful."

"Then she must have been at least beautiful!" corroborated Max with a smile as he tipped his chair against the opposite bunk.

"Is your sister also so—er—a—beautiful?" now inquired this imaginative boy.

"I haven't many adjectives, Dick," he laughed. "Doree is, simply said, a golden-haired little girl, so innocent, frank, and affectionate that all work for her is a pleasure."

Dick again fell over on his side. "Ahem! I've been wondering, chief, how you could ever save enough money those first two years to pay for her academy course."

Max was startled. "Was not the sum I mentioned to you enough?"

"It was for the academy, but scarcely enough for the forty incidentals for which she would have to ask you."

"She never asked me for more," responded the other with sudden gravity.

"Then I'm probably mistaken," ended Dick, though in his heart he still wondered. Not wishing to grieve his friend, he turned the conversation, "I'm sorry you've left the woods for good, chief. Your physique fits you to grasp with the elements."

"There are other mighty forces which the same good health and strength can grapple with," responded Max in low tones.

Dick knew of his great life purpose, and how also the very mention of it never failed to arouse him. "The Big Tree! The Big Tree!" he murmured. "You want to fell the Big Tree. Success, chief. I'll follow you in a few years." Then slowly Dick turned his face to the wall, for his voice was getting tired. "Good night, chief, I'm getting drowsy. Turn the lantern a little lower."

"I hear the men coming this way. Good night, Dick."

CHAPTER SIX.

THE WARRIOR AT THE HEARTH.

With Max Gilbert's promotion to the district agency there came also a more strained relation between himself and Adrian Chester. The agent could in an incredibly short time make his opposition very effective, since his own influence among the body of Ottawa business men was increasing almost phenomenally. By what exact means he could eventually raise himself to the position of supreme command he had not yet determined, but during these months of thought he would at least surmount many another obstacle in his path. One great bulwark of opposition was weakened already at the first annual meeting, when through Gilbert's influence two of the manager's directors were replaced by men a little bit more susceptible to argument for reform. Max determined that the next annual meeting would see this act duplicated; he would then have as much power on the board as Chester himself.

It did not take the manager long however to discover the trend of affairs. When two of his cronies were taken away from him, he already sensed a day when the same plotter could by the same means further weaken his position. Nevertheless he never regretted the time when he had appointed Max Gilbert district agent; let the man fill the coffers of the company for perhaps a year or two; Adrian Chester

could bide his time for he knew of a plot just a little more ingenious.

Whatever might be the personal motives of the agent, it was certain that his every act and idea redounded very much to the benefit of the company. Everywhere he was met with success so that business men throughout the whole province once more began to take notice of the once discredited "Northern". While others pondered at his good fortune he himself chafed at the supposedly slow progress. Yes, he must have free reign, and for this purpose Chester's bulwark of inactivity must be completely disintegrated at the very next annual meeting.

Thus the man labored at his duty and contrived his plot until four weeks before the much-awaited election of the directors. Then he abandoned all active work as district agent and devoted his whole attention to the more pressing ambition before him. The shareholders who alone had the right to vote were of course his principal point of attack; that he was successful with his self-appointed task, was evinced by the hearty affirmative which everywhere followed the interview.

Then came the great night of the general meeting. When the president entered the hall he was very much surprised to behold such a large number of shareholders present. Chester however possessed the faculty of ingratiating himself with the successful children of this world and with many an affable smile he was introduced to a leather manufacturer, a part owner of the great nickel mines, a corpulent soap

manufacturer, and many other influential men of various Ontario cities.

Because of the personal nature of the coming events, Max Gilbert thought it prudent to absent himself from the meeting; instead, he would spend the evening with Doree. Every one of his friends however promised faithfully to carry out the directions for the coup d'etat. Thompson was to inform him of the result that night over the telephone.

At this time, when business prospects had taken on a more hopeful aspect, the ambitious Gilbert rented a beautiful little home, situated at the end of one of Ottawa's new streets. The veranda running along two sides, gave a particularly excellent view towards the west where an unobstructed plain ran almost to the horizon.

That the number of the dwelling was forty constituted a very important element in Gilbert's selection, since this figure takes a very prominent position in all Indian symbolism.

The sister, for whom in truth Max Gilbert had done all this, completing the course in the Montreal Academy, had come to assume the position of mistress in the pleasant home. The meeting, after over three years' absence, was for both joyful in the extreme.

Once more we behold the beauty of this lass, now fifteen years of age, as on a certain evening, she sits opposite to Max in their daintily furnished parlor: the hair is still as golden, but twines now with even greater luxuriance about the youthful head; the frank innocence is still there, so are the laughing blue eyes, but setting off a complexion of such wonderful deli-

cacy as proudest dames with costliest art could never hope to equal; milk-white it is, and mantled by two faint rosy tinges that might have been the remains of an angel's kiss. The evening skies, too, weave pictures for a moment so frail in their loveliness that they must vanish with the next. So evanescent also seems this union of faint colors. Sweet the lips with their delicately indented curves and the shadow of a smile at the corners. A dress with no ornament save its own snowy whiteness gives material expression to that greatest charm of Doree Gilbert, her spotless purity. The radiance of her whole appearance has finally been perfected to the subtlety that is wont to follow a training under the lovable direction of kind sisters.

The brother's wonderful narratives of his former Dakota life constituted a never ceasing source of interest for her, while Max was always sufficiently repaid for his trouble by hearing the frequent outbursts of her lovable humor, that served as comments upon his explanations. His own inherent stoicism would vanish entirely as he came under the spell of her cheerful influence. More strange still, he became a sympathetic abettor of her childlike caprices in a manner for which we know no reason except a love of the heart that overcame the nature of the body with which he was born.

Max Gilbert, happily oblivious of the strange events transpiring at a general meeting only a few blocks away, sat in a capacious Turkish rocker before the fireplace. Doree across from him seemed determined to have some substantial amusement on this partic-

ular evening. "All your stories about that wonderful country," said she teasingly, "don't enlighten me a whit unless you put more color into them. Why not give us a tableau? What's the use of having an Indian brother, if he'll not even execute an Indian dance for his sister?" She turned her head prettily aside in mock resentment.

"Come, sit beside me, Doree," he pleaded graciously, "and I'll tell you the entire reason of my refusal."

"Can't come, Mr. Flying Arrow," she pouted, "and I'll not sit beside you for a whole week if you don't show me that Indian dance."

"In that case, my reason must be explained from here," he responded helplessly. "Now, isn't it true, that you only want to laugh at my contortions as I go through the dance?"

"No, honest," she protested, placing the most serious look possible into her blue eyes. "I'll promise not to laugh—except that I just can't help it." The condition was a mischievous one.

"But—" he was about to object, opening his palm in the manner of argument.

"Alright, Mr. Flying Arrow," she interrupted whimsically. "I'll not teach you another dance." Temptingly she added, "Have you heard of that dreamy waltz that was introduced in Ottawa only a few weeks ago?"

His look of unwillingness was painfully evident. "One of those wild dances would bring the roof down. The housekeeper would never forgive me for waking her up."

Throwing back her head she tried to further tantalize her brother by humming a few bars of the waltz already referred to. Then she swung her golden head vivaciously towards him. "It isn't fair, Mr. Flying Arrow," she complained. "Night after night you've been learning waltzes and two-steps, and now you'll not even repay me with a single dance of your own."

Nothing availed but he must indulge this winsome sister. Once convinced of the fact, the feelings of reluctance vanished, and he arose to the task as pleasantly as though there had never been any preliminary debate.

Proceeding first to his private office, he returned with two rulers that were apparently to be of use in the coming performance. "Stand back for safety's sake, Dorée," he commanded gaily, as he advanced to the center of the room. "Indians do terrible deeds in the course of such a dance."

Several sharp clicks came from the rulers and Max Gilbert began with a swaying of the body that seemed in rhythm with a melody slowly rising in his soul. The first movements carried no great meaning and might signify anything else but the dance of an untutored savage. Then a thrill shot suddenly and noticeably through his whole frame, telling him that the weird dance spirit of the Dakotas had come over Flying Arrow. As the sharp sounds of the instruments became more frequent, the motions of the lithe dancer waxed also more rapid and vehement. Louder now rose and fell the oft-repeated verces, the music of which might resemble the noise of a lone animal rampant in the velvet night. Then city and even im-

mediate surroundings were forgotten as the soul found itself once more among the silhouetted Kivas about a certain northern inlet. In a nearer circle, the camp fire in fitful glow illuminated the squatting forms of Silver Fox, Wolf Killer, Red Cloud, Hawk Eye, and a score of other familiar faces. A mysterious light shone in their dusky visages as if to encourage their future chief, Flying Arrow, to renewed efforts in his exhibition. In response, the gyrations of bodily contortions were increased to such perfection of rapidity and agility as might have resulted ingloriously were it not for the lithe quickness of the performer. The dormant Flying Arrow was resuscitated; the monosyllabic grunts of the circle gave evidence that never before had their future chief been so taken away with the dance spirit.

That performance coupled with the weird melody had aroused to action a dog sleeping before the fireplace. At first Fire Sticks only raised his head in sharp scrutiny. Then as the true meaning came over him, he stood up with every muscle and nerve trembling with a strange excitement. Whimpering he would retreat a few steps, then start forward again with nose to the ground, all the while barking gutturally as if at indistinct spectres rising up from the past. Finally he became silent and, settling on all fours, gazed with lolling tongue upon the spectacle. Nearly five years had passed since the canine had witnessed those acts to which his brute memory was now being recalled; perhaps as his head nodded cunningly in appreciation, he too saw before him the scenes of his youthful days, wonderful nights with their weird

stillness, the motley village with its flickering lights, the children, the papooses and what caused him the greatest delight, the innumerable puppies with which he had so often gambolled about the camp fires.

The fifteen-year-old sister, having never learned the peculiar significance of the Indian dance, could scarcely be expected to entertain feelings of awe and reverence for these curious antics; her conclusion rather went to considering this a highly spectacular circus performance. The first few minutes of novelty over, Doree was tried very severely in keeping a certain promise about her demeanor. Max was himself so oblivious of her very presence that he did not notice a pair of red lips held together heroically by five dainty little fingers. He was just executing a particularly agile maneuver heightened moreover by an unmusical rise in his song, when a silvery laugh broke through the digital bars, to fill every corner of the room with its sweet melody. Neither was that all; for peal followed peal in quick succession from the mutinous throat. Lastly she surrendered herself entirely to her mirth and throwing back the golden head gave full vent to her hilarity.

"Max! Max!" she cried, recovering her breath slightly. "Don't do it any more or I'll have to die."

At the sound of those merry peals, Flying Arrow was brought back to the present. Like a flash, the twilight among the Dakotah Kivas, the camp fires, and the dusky faces vanished; in their stead was visible only the generous light of a modern parlor. So also fled the animating spirit and Max Gilbert walked

slowly and silently to his former seat, there to cover his face with his hands.

Doree conquering her mirth, gazed towards her pensive brother. Immediately construing his apparent discomfiture as due to her own blameable behaviour, she walked penitently towards him and seated herself on the arm of his chair.

"Are you angry with me, Max?" she whispered softly into his ear.

"No, I can never be angry with you, Doree."

"If you aren't angry," she insisted sweetly, "remove your hands from your face."

He performed her request whereupon she utilized that opportunity to imprint a light kiss upon his forehead.

Climbing from her position, she stepped out before him. "Come, I'll teach you that new waltz now," she offered, extending her pretty palms.

"Not to-night, Doree," he answered kindly. "For me that dance had a religious significance, and I would rather therefore have it stand alone."

"Ah, but you shouldn't let that former life interfere with you, Max," she objected quietly, allowing her arms to drop, "because it's all wrong."

"Perhaps you are right," he responded gravely, "but these many sects that your civilization has produced, puzzle me very much. If they are all correct, why cannot also the Indian religion be the truth? We possess a moral code drawn directly from nature, while many of these modern religions took their rise from political disturbances and even from vice."

"But they are not all correct," she protested, seat-

ing herself on the footstool at his side. "There is only one true faith and that is the one which your parents practised. Many sects mean many contradictions, and God cannot be the author of contradictions."

Max Gilbert's advent into the more civilized atmosphere, marked also an evolution in that commixture of paganism and self-conceived notions which he called religion. To one so long imbued with error, so prejudiced against sectarianism, so strongly tenacious of his own opinions, the complete reversal to a new standard of belief, necessarily premised a combat of undue protraction.

Doree did in her youthful manner occasionally indulge in these debates, but on account of the circumstances just mentioned, her influence towards conversion must and did come from a radically different source. Unconsciously Max Gilbert was experiencing a power that arose not from noise of words but from its very secrecy; debate would have provoked his tenacity, but to this quiet exhortation, he could confront no arguments for it was not materially visible. Though only fifteen years old, this girl possessed such a deep and tender piety, as would be a glowing virtue even with one of maturer years. The perfect regulation of her exterior demeanor, the resplendent virtues imbuing every sentiment, yea, even the delicate aroma of chastity exuding from her pure body, were like a heavenly nimbus working with sweet persuasion upon this stoical brother. The recognition of the higher purpose that illuminated her every thought and deed, was slowly but surely dissolving the fumes

of superstition and pagan symbolism that had lain so thickly in his own heart.

"A new friend will soon be added to our circle," diverted Max with resumed gaiety. "Dick Kildare has promised to join us shortly."

"Isn't that the young man about whom you've spoken so frequently?" she asked interestedly. "Will he make our house his permanent home?"

"No, he wouldn't consent to that," answered Max, "but we'll find him a good boarding-house."

"How old is he? What color is his hair?" she asked rapidly, desirous in her youthful innocence of obtaining a good description of the famous Dick.

"He is about twenty-two years of age and his hair is of a chestnut color," answered Max. "You have very many questions to ask about this unknown gentleman," he concluded naively.

"No, I haven't, Max. Only one more, though," she begged, at the same time lowering her eyes in thought. "You've made frequent references to his being very well educated. In that case, how explain his following that rough life in the lumber camp?"

"I dare not explain the reason, sister," said Max smiling. "The revelation of that secret would violate river etiquette, for lumbermen ask no questions, and tell no tales of another's private life. That Dick was straightforward, was sufficient for the lumberjacks. Perhaps you'll succeed in drawing the secret from him yourself."

She rested her chin in her hand as if to signify the abandonment of the vain topic. "Is he comical?" she asked finally and after a pause.

"Well, I'll forgive that question and will answer it since it is so essential of Dick's reception." Taking a more reminiscent position, he continued: "Dick Kildare is never serious. According to his own statement, the last time he was serious was when the other fellow cracked the joke and it was a poor one. He's an inveterate story-teller, a perfect world of good cheer. With all that, he is nevertheless a perfect gentleman, alert and manly."

"What occupation will Dick follow?" came once more from Doree.

"He has consented to become an agent of our insurance company. The work in my agency has increased so much that I really need the assistance of such a live young gentleman. Dick possesses energy, great fluency of speech, and also a certain ingratiating faculty which I'm sure will make him a success at the business." Just then the word "Dismissed" was used in that same meeting not far away. And what would Dick do now?

"It seems you're very ambitious about your work, Max," put in the sister. "The addition of another member to your staff will assist very materially."

It was not often that Doree entered upon this topic because business figures never had any special attraction for her; sometimes, however, she practised a little self-conquest on account of the pleasure such a conversation invariably afforded her brother.

"You'll be getting very rich one of these days," she went on in true admiration. "Do you remember how, at our first acquaintance, I suggested that you buy a big house and I be your housekeeper?"

"The house and the housekeeper have become a reality," he responded with a dry smile. To himself he added, "The riches will come in greater abundance when Chester and I will have fought our battle decisively.

"What's that?" she asked, contracting her eyebrows prettily.

"Nothing, Dorce. I hear the telephone ringing."

Max took down the receiver. "Well, Thompson, what's the news?"

Thompson's voice was so choked with anger that Max had to ask him to repeat his message. "You're dismissed," called the director.

"Dismissed!" gasped Max.

"Yes," answered the other. "When we had elected the directors according to our plan, Chester livid with anger, arose to make a statement of his own. 'Gentlemen,' he began, 'there have been so many changes made here to-night, that perhaps one more would not do any harm. I therefore expel Max Gilbert from his position as district agent of the 'Northern' and appoint Mr. Fink in his place'."

"And Chester had the courage to do this act?" once more came from the startled listener.

"Yes. Every one of your own directors resigned and left Chester and his brood in possession of the hall."

Max Gilbert left the receiver dangling against the wall, and walked silently and slowly to his room.

The Dakotah, the man who would never forgive a wrong, who would never leave the trail of an enemy, was struck sorely once more—"expelled in disgrace" the people would say.

CHAPTER SEVEN.

IN HOSTILE ARRAY.

Going upstairs Max nearly stumbled over the sleeping form of Fire Sticks. "Come with me," he spoke to the awakened canine, "for we're a little downcast to-night." He patted the dog's head, and Fire Sticks whimpered his delight at the caress.

Arrived in his room Max ensconced himself in a capacious rocker, while the dog rested his nose on his master's knee to await further attention. "Now let's think," continued the man, sinking still deeper into the upholstery. "They've repelled our first attack, haven't they, but we must execute some maneuver to get back to the field of battle."

Long after the canine had fallen asleep, did Max Gilbert sit beneath the dim glow of the electric light evolving a plan that was bold and was perilous. "Yes, I can do it," he would exclaim intermittently to himself and fall to thinking heavily once more.

A motion of Fire Sticks again drew his attention to his faithful companion. Perhaps it gave him increased strength to ruminate morbidly on the past that the sight of this dog invariably aroused. "They've thrown us out," he spoke, "and after we came almost two thousand miles to build up their company." He bent more closely over the dog. "How would you like to be with old chief, Silver Fox, now, eh? Lonesome sometimes, aren't you? Perhaps I could be chief

now, couldn't I? Instead we must make ourselves chiefs over a white tribe," he finished with satisfying melancholy.—Again a long silence.—

Up rose a new figure before his view; this time of a tall, slender young woman of queenly grace and ravishing beauty.

"Flavia," he murmured slowly and sadly, "you're gone now for you'll cling to your father in this struggle. 'Fresh as a rose'," he ruminated. "After all it was only one of those meetings by the wayside and our short acquaintance on the river was for nothing."

An oppressive feeling tried to overwhelm him; for now worlds of darkness and resentment were conjured up before the distraught mind of the ousted official.

The faithful dog at his side was forgotten as the master yielded totally to the sombre emanations of his grieving soul. "Revenge!" he exclaimed. "And now a greater revenge."

No, a passing interest in a beautiful face could not deter him from his stern resolve. He could indeed have looked forward with pleasure to a longer acquaintance with this beautiful woman but as yet he was not sufficiently influenced to disobey the fates who were calling him elsewhere; they had told him of his Dakota training and of how at present he had twice the number of reasons for revenge upon his enemy.

Again a long silence ensued. Only an occasional twist of the lips or the raising of the eyelashes betokened how successfully he was evolving every detail of his bold plan.

Finally he came to his feet and we gain a hint of the newly conceived resolution. "Fire Sticks," he said firmly, "before a year has passed I'll be manager of an insurance company that will drive Chester's out of existence."

The father publicly disgraced, the son trodden under feet—oh, how did his Indian heart burn with almost fiendish revenge!

And must he leave these people who had begun to love him so well? Chester had for the moment severed every cord that bound him to things affectionate. But no, this was the one man in all the world who could never drive him from the field of battle. Over a year ago he had conceived an idea that at first appalled even him with its daring. To-night he could organize a world and lead it to battle. Yes, everything was now possible: these very people, this very city would see him in the lists again. Max Gilbert thought over his resolution for a moment, then again bent over the dog. "It's time for a rest now, old dog; we'll think more about it to-morrow."

With the first mail after breakfast, Max Gilbert received a letter from Adrian Chester containing the following curt notice: "At your very earliest convenience return the policy registers to the company's office."

A set look overshadowed the bayed man's strong face. "He can have them after a couple of days," he hissed, "but in the meantime, those books will be used as they have never been used before: if he has a point to gain, I have another."

Just then the door-bell rang, and Thompson and Nickle were introduced into the private office.

"Good morning," greeted Max with a calmness peculiar to many great men when surrounded by the most perplexing difficulties. "How are you both?"

"Darn him," said Thompson, looking dryly at his companion, "that's just what we intended asking him."

"Not spoiled yet, as you see," he answered pointing to a seat.

"Darn him," again remarked Thompson to his friend, "if the man for once in his life hasn't taken to joking."

"We don't like to ask questions," began Nickle nervously, "but didn't the events of last night leave you rather down in the mouth?"

"A little bit shaken up," he confessed, "but not prostrated for the rest of my life."

"If I were in your position," remarked Thompson taking a seat, "this world would look to me like a huge desert one million miles long and ten times as broad, with not a tree in sight." Leaning forward he continued more seriously, "I don't know what business you'll take up now, but you can count on me being with you in any prospect you may choose."

Gilbert was visibly touched by this simple avowal of fidelity. "I appreciate your friendship, Thompson, for I know that not a word is exaggerated."

"Now if I were in your position," interrupted Nickle, "I'd be in a worse condition than that proverbial

'Humpty Dumpty who wasn't humble,

And so came down in a deuce of a tumble'."

Both men were more than surprised at Gilbert's next remark. "I've already evolved a plan which will enable me to fulfil every vow and resolution I ever made in regard to Adrian Chester"—and he smiled mysteriously.

"What is it?" both exclaimed simultaneously.

Then they listened to a plan of such remarkable ingenuity as could come only from the master mind of Max Gilbert, a plan so astonishingly bold withal, that his hearers could only utter an occasional exclamation of surprise.

After a studied silence, however, they overwhelmed him with a thousand and one questions about its feasibility, to all of which Max gave a most satisfactory answer.

"It will be a revenge to draw the attention of the world upon you," remarked Thompson as he was leaving.

No sooner had the two friends departed than Max opening the safe, drew out the large policy registers of the "Northern Cash & Mutual". Again, producing a smaller red book, he set to work copying page after page of the names before him. This action must have had a close bearing on the plot, for hour after hour he continued at his desk until the summons for luncheon called the first stop to his strenuous labor.

All afternoon and far into the evening did that tense figure remain bent over the volumes until about eleven o'clock when a pain in the head forced him to

desist from the unusual strain. Several little red books filled to the last page lay beside him.

During the afternoon of the second day's labor Doree interrupted him for a moment in his office. "Oh, Max," she exclaimed holding him at arm's length, "I've been wondering what has kept you so busy all day. There's nothing the matter, is there, Max?"

"Nothing, Doree, as you see," he answered, concealing the bitterness that longed too much for exterior expression. Gazing on that figure in well-fitting blue, he resolved in no way to dampen her present happiness with a rehearsal of his wrongs.

"Walking is splendid to-day," began Max several hours afterwards upon returning home.

"Indeed I enjoyed my afternoon's outing very much," seconded Doree hanging up his fur coat. "And now I'll make you the finest supper you've ever had, just to take that gloom off your face."

The meal was begun in due time and Doree gave a lively description of a humorous incident she had with a friend that afternoon. To her surprise, however, Max made very few comments of interest on the little event. Nor were the steaming, appetizing dishes able to arouse him from the brown study into which he had fallen. Doree's encouragements would indeed have been sweet at that moment but he would forego them and withhold all disclosures for the present. Often he would seize something on his fork, then hold it in the air while he revolved certain ideas in his mind, or gazing fixedly at one spot would forget plate, food, and even the charming narrator at the other end.

"What's the matter, Max?" at length asked Doree, studying him narrowly. "You're as stern as can be: you're not talking nor eating, but looking continually into empty space."

He roused himself guiltily at her remark. "Nothing the matter at all, Doree; this miserable drizzle must have affected me."

"You affected by the weather!" she laughed. "Well that is comical. Yes, you're certainly of a frail, delicate build, very, very nervous, etc., not at all able to bear sudden changes of climate. Brother, I believe you're departing from the truth. But won't you tell me what's made you so silent?" she pleadingly ended.

"You're right, Doree. There is something else: I have a new idea, and am just wondering whether it is feasible. I'll tell you all about it to-morrow," he promised. "You can wait till then, can't you?"

"Be sure, though," warned Doree.

"Doree," declared Max that evening about nine o'clock, "if anyone calls for me, tell them I am not at home. I'm going into the office."

"All right, Max," answered his beautiful sister.

She was a little downcast this night, because for ~~once~~ Max had taken no interest in her narratives.

Three days he worked, then one morning at about twenty minutes to ten, he was able to rise, the work completed.

It had been herculean labor, a feverish task with a portent reaching through the years, and constituting the means for the dethronement of his direst enemy.

In the little red books manipulated by the copyist, now stood revealed the entire statistics of the "North-

ern Cash & Mutual", as also the name of every policyholder with the expiring date of his insurance. That the work was over strenuous, was seen in the present actions of its agent.

Gilbert rising suddenly, placed his hands to his head. "Dizzy, eh? Head is all twisted. Seems breaking," he ejaculated, reeling a few steps. "No, can't walk straight." Nature claimed her toll, and completely exhausted, utterly fatigued in body and soul, he staggered forward to sink languidly into a large Morris chair. Doree, who had witnessed the act, was beside him in a moment.

"Max, I knew you overdid it," she exclaimed, looking anxiously at his drawn face; the slightest suspicion of danger to her brother was always to her an overwhelming anxiety.

"It had to be finished, Doree; had to be finished," he repeated, trying to gain control of his distracted senses.

This was the stoic, the unemotional man, who, people said, was governed only by the iron rule of duty, yet near this angelic sister he manifested a trait of which they were totally ignorant; perhaps he could have risen a moment sooner but that he so loved the ministrations of this angel, her delicate touch, her innocent soothing, her anxious inquiries.

And what in the meantime of the world without? That reaction of feeling expected by Max arose indeed like a sudden storm and sweeping over the city gave expression of itself in terms the most violent. Gilbert had made himself known and loved, not only in Ottawa, but also in the neighboring towns and cities,

and as men now learned of the fate that had befallen him, a veritable tornado of wrath and abuse was hurled at the head of the chief perpetrator, Adrian Chester.

With few exceptions, the thousands of policy-holders felt it their duty to voice publicly the wrongs of the expelled district agent, preparing thus a most fertile ground for the plan conceived that memorable night after the meeting.

It was a peculiar plan, and some would under the circumstances consider it rash; but the power of organization was inborn in this man, and he went steadily onward, never doubting the result.

All of us have at some time or other taken notice of the extensive advertising of some insurance companies whose credit indeed seems to have no limit. It is in fact not such an outrageous hyperbole to declare, that half the world might be consumed and still leave some of the wealthier English concerns with the breath of life. Their sphere of activity recognizes no national or geographical boundaries, but proceeds with the progress of civilization across broad oceans and fertile continents, to stand beside the intrepid explorer, when barbarous peoples alone bid them stop their advance. Their's is not a mutual benefit association with the policy-holders, but a vast gigantic investment for the sole purpose of enriching their thousands of shareholders. Boldly insuring risks before whose vastness lesser concerns would quail, these leviathans are quickly enabled to surround themselves with the walls of gold that place them in surety

against future catastrophies. Such an achievement, Gilbert now desired to duplicate.

That Max Gilbert was decidedly in earnest with his new-born project was shown by a secret canvass which he immediately instituted among the monied men of his own city. This completed, he proceeded to large manufacturing centers like Toronto, Bellville, Kingston, and Hamilton, doubled back upon his route again, and continued the same work in the cities of Quebec and Montreal. Everywhere he counselled secrecy.

His fame as a most successful organizer was sufficient to gain him a favorable hearing from most of these men. Some were captivated by the boldness of the plan; others by its intrinsic feasibility; and more again by the absolute confidence they reposed in the master workman. His relentless, determined efforts could not help but bear fruit, and after several months, he at length returned to his own city with a countenance evincing the happy results of his mission.

"You'll stay at home now for a while, won't you?" coaxed Doree at supper that night.

"Pretty soon," he answered. "Just one more trip, early tomorrow morning, then we'll have a few days together."

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"To Hull city," he answered. "To-morrow we'll see the mayor of Hull. I've purposely kept him off to the last."

"And why?"

"Because I wish to convince him," replied her brother, "by displaying the results of my previous

canvass. If he consents to become a supporter, I can undoubtedly secure several hundred other shareholders in his city, especially among the middle classes with whom I am very well acquainted. Eventually also that will be the means of bringing the whole of Hull into the new company."

Had he but known what a portentous future clung to those words!

Next morning the mayor of Hull, A. J. Forrester, a stately old man with white side-burns, received Max into audience.

"Good morning," he exclaimed. "How are you, Mr. Gilbert?"

"Fine, fine."

"Take a seat, Mr. Gilbert. That was a rather mean trick they served on you about two months ago?"

"It was," answered Max.

"Haven't seen you around at all since then," remarked the mayor, drumming on his desk with a pencil. "Surely they haven't quieted you altogether?"

"Not at all; in fact I'm here exactly to disabuse you of all such ideas."

"So, so, how will you do it?" he asked good-naturedly.

"I'm going to form a new company," Max stated abruptly.

"A new insurance company?" inquired the mayor with only faint interest.

"Yes, the intention is to organize another in the very same city to battle with Chester's, to take his business from him and to build up another company which can stand beside 'the greatest in the world.'"

His listener had raised his white bushy eyebrows. "That's a very big undertaking, Mr. Gilbert. A newly organized company, you know, can scarcely hope to oust one already firmly established."

"It does appear difficult," admitted the other, "but I believe we have the means to do it."

"What can they be, for instance?"

"They're many," responded Gilbert. "First, we'll capitalize at four times the sum written for the Northern Cash & Mutual, which means one million dollars." Then nodding his head towards his inquisitor, "And we expect the mayor of Hull to be one of our largest shareholders."

"One million dollars," ejaculated the official contemplating the ceiling. "A terrible sum! A huge sum! Am I the first prospective shareholder?"

"You are not. I thought I would not interview you until nearly all the subscribed capital had been realized."

"And has it?"

"Almost. We have already several thousand shareholders promised by signature from various cities throughout Ontario and Quebec."

"Even big capitalization may not be a sufficient safeguard," doubted the other, exhibiting some of the acumen which had made him such a success in life.

"Our second intention," continued Gilbert, "is to become a company separate from the big trust to which all present companies are affiliated, in short, to become an outlaw company."

Forrester pursed his lips in even greater surprise. "And what good will come of that?" he asked.

"That," answered Max, "will leave us free to introduce what reforms we wish, without first asking a trust's permission. If reforms are needed, we can make them more quickly and thus gain members before the other companies dare follow suit."

Gilbert produced the little red books from an inner pocket. "Here are the means," he declared resolutely. "In these books stand the names of every member of the Northern Co. with the exact date of the expiration of his policy. It took me over three days to do the work, but that will prove its own reward; through these we have a complete knowledge of our opponent's business; whenever one of his risks expire, you may rest assured our agent will be there, doing his utmost to wrest the policy from the former holders."

Forrester leaned forward to examine the booklets, and incidentally to discover the reasons for such strenuous copying, over which our readers may thus far have been wondering. "True, true," he muttered between pauses, "that gives your agents a wonderful advantage. Every expiration will mean a battle between the two forces."

The greater part of the morning was consumed in discussing the pros and cons of the embryo project. The astute man of affairs would not be hurried into any scheme, but when it was near dinner time, he surprised Gilbert with the abrupt remark:

"Write down my name for seven thousand dollars."

Max joyfully received his signature, and after another short conversation, departed. Immediately after the public announcement of the company's

organization, he would use that potent name to facilitate his further canvass in Hull. His own popularity with the middle and lower classes, combined with the mayor's assistance, was sure to gain him many hundreds of subscribers; indeed, it afterwards developed that many took their last cent from the bank to take shares in Max Gilbert's new company.

Forrester, buried deep in thought, remained standing in the middle of the floor after Max's departure. "A great man," he confided to his bushy whiskers. "One in ten thousand! And he intends to bleed Chester's company of all its members. Those little red books are a great scheme. Revenge seems to be his strongest motive, but that's none of my business. It'll mean the greatest insurance conflict ever waged in the Dominion of Canada: the two cannot be victorious—one must be vanquished—I believe my seven thousand is safe."

And of all this Chester suspected nothing. Perhaps momentary success had blinded him, or perhaps new difficulties in his own company prevented his giving thought to any other.

Weeks and months went by. The ousted agent seemed to have yielded to defeat. Then one day to startle the whole Canadian insurance world, came Max Gilbert's daring announcement of the formation of a new company, named the "Western World", and capitalized at the enormous sum of \$1,000,000. Like a pirate upon the high seas had this organization detached itself from almost everything that savored of conservative and established precedents, daring to battle against the world with practically no

security, save its own dauntlessness. By-laws, statutes, reforms, everything, hinted of the most radical departure from time-worn customs. Again was the populace surprised when they saw this infantile concern take up its abode in one of the largest and costliest buildings on Ottawa's main thoroughfare. The same spirit of lavishness dictated the gorgeous furnishings and when all was completed, the "Western World" awaited its business in offices more palatial than any other insurance company of which the broad Dominion could boast.

Families, towns, and whole cities, became interested in the remarkable procedure; they both wondered at and admired the unheard of prodigality, which everywhere permeated this organization. All the world loves a mighty hand, and it was evident that the soul of this strange enterprise was broad and masterly. There was however a second reason for their interest, for it marked the inception of a mighty struggle, not so much of soulless institutions, as of two men who hated each other most cordially and who would put forth their strongest and most valiant efforts in the approaching combat.

Again contrary to all precedent in the history of these leviathans of business, Max Gilbert himself entered the field of canvassers to gain proselytes for the outlaw company; only the rigorous determination that underlay the vast project, could ever have influenced him to an action so unheard of; he was resolved, though, to leave no stone unturned to overcome his mighty rival. Clerks and stenographers were astounded at the activity of a manager who

could transact office business with such great care and dispatch, and still find time to perform the ordinary duties of an agent.

Success was not to be immediately expected, for men are after all like boys who go in swimming on a cold day; the youths know it will be pleasant after they are in the water, nevertheless all dislike to take the first shivering plunge. Though fully persuaded by the irresistible arguments of Gilbert, many Ottawa people withheld their confidence until more of their neighbors would give them the example. But, that master mind was bringing its most brilliant forces into play; that intellect wove arguments the most convincing; his sweet voice talked its sweetest; a commendable energy now became an irrepresible force; that business acumen was sharpened to its finest point; an inborn tact became as an arrow that could pierce the strongest armor. He was all to all, a veritable apostle, a St. Paul transformed into a business man. He laughed with the joyful, wept with the mournful, enduring heat, hunger and cold, to reach the most distant homes. It was a difficult work, but such methods made the beginning. Two came, ten came, then fifty, until very soon the deserters from the Chester ranks could be counted by the hundreds.

Several months after the inauguration of the "Western World", Max Gilbert, happening to be in the vicinity of A. J. Forrester's residence, thought that a little call would not be amiss. He was strangely surprised however when upon entering the

mayor's private office he came face to face with his old enemy, Adrian Chester.

The position of Chester and Forrester evidenced that a none too agreeable conversation had been interrupted.

Forrester, now the president of the new company, turned smilingly towards the intruder.

"Mr. Gilbert," he coughed, "I have just received a severe reprimand for having lent my name and assistance to your new company and for perhaps what is most blameworthy, namely, allowing myself to be elected the president." Neither his smile nor his good humor could however take the tenseness from the situation. These two foes had not met since the day of the ousting, and anger pent up for months now could brook no further restraint. Forrester anticipated the word-combat and the secrets which might be disclosed, so very prudently he found pressing business in another room.

Chester, his face lived with anger, was slowly turning to his opponent. "Mr. Gilbert," he declared heavily, "I demand an explanation of your line of conduct since I first had the misfortune of meeting you."

Max Gilbert was cool and therefore most dangerous. "You scarcely mean the word 'demand', Mr. Chester," he answered with deliberate sarcasm. "Might, yes, dare I ask you why you demand such an accounting?"

Chester allowed himself to be somewhat flustered by the other's coolness and unconsciously he fell into the inferior position of answering to a question.

"That at the present time we are enemies needs no explanation, nor am I troubled over that. But why at our first meeting did you assume a hostile attitude towards me? Why did you force yourself into my affairs when you knew you were intruding? Why afterwards did you harass me in every possible way, until finally as it was evident, you even tried to gain control of the Northern Company?"

A smile was playing about Max Gilbert's lips. Though with the progress of his questions Chester's voice had risen to a threatening tone, Max Gilbert never betrayed a tremor of his emotions, he seemed rather to look upon Chester as an ultimate and certain victim in this battle of words.

The silence nettled Chester the more. "Who are you?" he followed up recklessly. "Where do you come from?" came again as if by sound of words he could break down all opposition.

Chester stood before a window so that the light fully displayed his livid countenance. His opponent was in the shadow, and shadows hung heavily upon his set and resolute face.

Now Max Gilbert advanced a step. There was something so foreboding about the motion that the other retreated as at an unseen danger. He had come within two paces of his enemy and still there was silence. Then as his hands were clenched beside him he made reply but in a voice scarcely audible for its stifling emotions. "Who gives you the role of questioner, Chester?" he hissed. "Who dares to say that a Gilbert is responsible to a Chester for his actions?" Every word cut with intended sarcasm.

"No," floundered Chester, "it's not that. I want to know where you stand; I want to know the reason of all this hatred, this ceaseless warfare." He had grasped the back of his chair to brace himself for the ordeal at hand.

Max Gilbert was in perfect control of himself. "So," he smiled bitterly, "you are playing 'injured innocence,' Adrian Chester? I would not consider it worth my while to refute your supposition. Neither do I consider it worth my time to ask the reason of your hatred and constant warfare. I go further and say that I court opposition in order that I may defeat you the more decisively. I hope you'll use every means both fair and foul in this battle that when I finally stand over you, I can say that I have defeated every part of your makeup."

Chester took up courage as the speaker did not follow up his words with a more hostile action. And now the angry look gave way to that dominating sneer of the olden days. His hold on the chair even relaxed as he no longer felt that support necessary. "Who are you, anyway?" he asked with his chin tilted sarcastically. "Where did you come from?" Because of the repetition there was an insulting insinuation about the question.

"Chester!"

The one addressed looked up in surprise and again his hand sought the chair.

"Does not my name bring memories to you of years gone by?" asked Gilbert in low thick tones.

"Gilbert, Gilbert," ruminated the other as if forced to do so by the stronger character.

"Do you remember an old man by that name who used to live in the city of Winnipeg? Max continued relentlessly.

An ashen look of surprise and fear came upon Chester while he grasped his support still more firmly.

"Do you remember a man you ruined many years ago in that city?" With that Max Gilbert's strong hand fell upon Chester's shoulder.

The Northern official winced beneath the pain while like a hunted animal his small eyes wandered restlessly about for an avenue of escape. Answer he could not make: accusing spectres were rising from the past; the God of vengeance had finally discovered him. Yes, he remembered, and he feared and he trembled.

Max loosed his hold and for a brief moment contemplated the wretch before him: he saw how the man in the midst of his fear was still defiant; how the information of his discovery would only make him more vindictive. Chester was too cowardly to oppose him in the present dangerous situation but again beyond reach of his enemy's powerful arm he would indeed use every means both fair and foul to bring about his ruin. There was no need of protracting the scene with such a man, still Max was so overpowered with emotion that he felt he must throw down the gauntlet for once and for all.

"Answer me," cried Gilbert, standing over him. There could be no answer. "Yes, I'll tell you; I'm that man's son. You dealt with an old man that time, Adrian Chester, but henceforth you must deal

with brawn and a strong heart, a heart with a purpose." Chester would gladly have moved but that he feared physical violence from this enraged man. "I've come to settle a score for that ruined man," continued Max with strong disgust. "You've tried to drive me from the city as you once drove my father to his death. You seem to have lived just to bring disgrace upon me and mine."

Here was re-born one named Flying Arrow, who cast his steely eyes upon Adrian Chester, and, falling back to the picturesque language which anger always provoked, exclaimed in a voice thrilling with emotion: "No oath is needed to strengthen my words, Adrian Chester, but I swear by all I love that I'll work against you till I destroy you; no rest will soothe my own limbs until I surround you with dangers and phantoms that will drive you mad; I'll follow you as the Indian does his deadliest foe; I'll watch you as the panther does its prey, and when at last we meet again, then like the bear with its victim, so will I crush you to death." With that terrible pronouncement and disgusted at the man's cowardice, Max Gilbert walked from the room.

CHAPTER EIGHT.

GLADSOME RIPPLES.

Except for the occasional trips in company with his Indian dog along the shores of the Ottawa river, Max Gilbert was never known to have sought an hour of exterior recreation. The murmuring and splash of the waters recalled memories of days gone by on Lake Winnipegosis, days redolent of different sentiments. Those old times of superstitious belief were clothed with many a beautiful dress, and again and again therefore did he return to the farewell. Perhaps Fire Sticks too, as he beheld the river, recalled the splash of that mightier body of water, to which his baby ears had first listened.

Max Gilbert was playing with an invitation card. Yes, tonight he would indulge himself—at least such was his peculiar notion of the ball. There was a special reason too for the resolve. How many years had passed since he saw that beautiful young woman on the Ottawa! And so strange that she should just be the daughter of his mortal enemy.

Her returns to her home city had been so few and so brief that Max had never been able to renew their very slight acquaintance. But to-night he was curious; tonight he must see her. Had the intervening years made her more lovely than she appeared that day on the river bank? The picture of the youthful girlish figure must vanish however for she

must now have arrived at the very loveliest period of budding womanhood.

Of course he would be only a dim picture in the gorgeous panarama of her acquaintances. Even if she would remember more, she probably had not yet connected the identity of Gilbert the Manager with the rough woodsman.

Furthermore, since she had not been in the city for six months, she had probably not even heard of the dismissal, or of the formation of the new company. But this circumstance might help to make their meeting both peculiar and interesting.

The invitation to Senator Libau's ball had come to Max a week previously. Human as even this Dakotah was, he longed now more ardently for but an hour of thrilling surprises before returning to the acrimonious combat. His dream of the forest would be there. He could even forget his revenge, and in the intervening time wonder and still wonder what strange experiences would be attached to their meeting.

Then the evening came, and Max Gilbert found himself amidst the brilliancy of a fashionable ball. Men in evening clothes, many of whose names were already inscribed on the nation's roll of honor, were mingling with dames, and damoiselles in costumes the most gorgeous. The capital had indeed poured forth its dignity and beauty into these spacious parlors. From secluded positions marble nymphs, cupids, gods, and goddesses reached forth frosted lights to further enhance the variegated throng that treaded its way through those stately halls.

Max Gilbert's remarkable achievements in Ottawa had opened an acquaintance with most of those present: he had to be introduced to only four foreign personages who were making their debut into the capital's social circles.

He was not in a great hurry to fill his dance-card, although a few names had been secured while he renewed his acquaintances with several of the female portion of the assembly: one admirable representative of that gracious sex had not yet appeared.

At the end of the room he finally became engaged in conversation with a vivacious dark-haired girl named Lucy Annette.

"It's over a year since we met, Mr. Gilbert," she began. "I was quite convinced you'd have settled to a more permanent existence."

"You mean get ——," he queried humorously.

"To be sure."

"The obstacles may be created by the other party," he suggested smilingly. "Will you be seated?"

"Not in the least," laughed the young woman. Then she continued mischievously, "Shall I mention a full dozen here to-night that might make successful angling?"

"Don't, please don't," retorted Max. "You might compromise them against their will."

"There she is now," suddenly interrupted Lucy.

"Who? asked Max.

"Flavia Chester," she replied. "She just arrived with her father: she'll be down after she has discarded her furs. Haven't you heard of her?"

Lucy, noticing that the after remarks of her com-

panion were rather listless, asked him if he was acquainted with the subject of her recent remark.

"Slightly," he replied startled from his dreams. "Very slightly indeed. She may not ——."

He never finished that sentence for a lull in the buzzing conversation told him that some person of note had entered at the further end of the room. The next moment there came before his view a young woman of such resplendant beauty as might make her a criterion for a whole generation: a luxuriant wealth of glossy dark hair seemingly held in fold by a small cluster of delicate white buds crowned her stately head. The face was one to draw attention and never to be forgotten: the almost translucent skin was mantled even to the ivory throat with a breath of faint crimson, that gave the idea both of health and delicacy; her features bore sufficient prominence to give expression to a deeply intellectual and resolute mind, and likewise to further enhance a beauty already ravishing; a deep highly wrought soul lay in those, large, luminous, perhaps somewhat melancholy eyes, with their nicely balanced lashes and eyebrows; two well-defined lips possessed a color so exquisite and in such perfect harmony with the other features that no artist's brush however skilful could ever reproduce them. Here was an aristocratic countenance, a personality that could take possession of a drawing-room with as much equanimity as a queen receiving homage in her throne room.

A dress of green marquissette was worked with delightful relief over blue silk, while a band which hinted of a girdle, drew together the soft lines of her

bodice; her sleeves were draped over deep cuffs of cream lace frills, and held together at the upper point by a large ornament; the soft flowing skirt finally set off a youthful figure, willowy in its grace and perfect symmetry.

"Fresher than a rose," Max Gilbert found himself repeating. It was the same expression he had once applied to her in the woods.

She was treading her way in and out amongst groups of acquaintances. "Such a creature," thought he, once called "Flying Arrow", "might stand beside the sapling on the mountain and move to the wind not less gracefully. He watched the play of those heavy lashes as she exchanged lightsome remarks with friends, and thought that here was life, fresh youth and beauty in the realization.

Removing his unpardonable stare for a moment, Max noticed that one personage, James Fink, was contemplating the young woman of the superb carriage as studiously as he himself. Flavia Chester had evidently met the official before, for no formal introduction was necessary when they met. His manifest efforts to monopolize her company were discouraged, however, by her very artless procession to the next group.

She had come within five feet of Max Gilbert, when her eyes were turned full upon him. Almost unconsciously he advanced a step and extended his hand. The contraction of her dark eyebrows showed that she was arguing within herself about his identity. All too quickly did her beautiful perplexity vanish for the entranced beholder, when a

light as of the smiling dawn overspreading her countenance, she extended five dainty digits to greet him.

"You are the man from the river," she remarked happily and in a low voice.

"And you are the young woman from the river," he replied with evident pleasure.

"Only of one day's experience though," she corrected amiably, allowing her hand to leave him. "A longer stay among nature's delights might have caused me to forsake the drawing-room forever. But where is your riverman's garb?" she asked bewildered. "How do you get here? You look so strange: I never expected to see you in a ball-room."

He would not answer her numerous questions for a moment. Glancing to one side, he pointed to two vacant chairs. "I stand almost at the end of the row of your acquaintance," he suggested. This would probably be their last meeting and he longed to get just a little better acquainted with this beautiful creature.

She must have been well aware that several others were near waiting for just such an opportunity. Homage from the male sex must already have become ordinary to her, for she graciously and simply acquiesced in his proposal.

The sentiments elicited by such a strange meeting were for her peculiar. During the intervening years she had occasionally called up the memorable river scene; indeed, the very vividness of the incidents rendered forgetting difficult; now it was curiously interesting to come thus unexpectedly into contact with the hero of that thrilling episode.

"It's strange that we should meet again," she began in a sweet voice, "and that under such totally different circumstances." Her lustrous eyes enlarged as if to comprehend that incident on the river: the scene of years ago was more picturesque; really at first sight, this man of the splendid physique seemed to have lost in the change from the lumberman's garb into evening clothes; that however, was mere phantasy.

"Fate often transports us to places we never dreamed of seeing," he replied unconsciously giving expression to a lingering remnant of the fatalistic pagan days.

"Fate!" Flavia Chester was about to interject as she scented a pagan sentiment. Their acquaintance however, was as yet too ephemeral to let her assume the role of questioner, so very politely she swerved into a different channel. A new note of interest had, however, been sounded by that peculiar remark of Max Gilbert's. A riverman! A fatalist!

She turned her eyes admiringly upon him as if indeed he still occupied the position of the romantic days. "Your saving that youth was the most wonderful deed I ever witnessed," she declared.

Thus suddenly made the object of her praise, he humbly fell deeper into his chair. "In critical moments we often act without thinking, and therefore without merit." Then he met her gaze. "Your own cry of warning was one of the greatest factors towards the successful issue."

Flavia Chester gave vent to a mirthful laugh, displaying at the same time a set of perfect ivory teeth.

"The excuse for your own action is scarcely well drawn from my part in the proceedings. Never give any credit to a woman for screaming: in the presence of danger it is for her the most natural way of breathing; it's a kind of universal panacea for diseases of the mind, heart and body," she explained, happily and with beautiful abandon.

"You are more depreciative of your sex than some would be," he replied mechanically for he was still far from his ease.

"Not in the least," she replied quickly. "I wanted only to call your attention to one of their eccentricities. Men have theirs also, and it is debatable as to which sex is burdened the more."

"By the way," she broke off, "I know more about your family than you think."

"How?"

"I know all about your sister," she began blithely. "Her name is Doree, isn't it?"

"Yes." Now Max Gilbert was deeply interested. "Where did you come to know her?"

"I happened to be at the academy when she first entered." She brightened up as she saw how her companion liked the trend of the conversation and purposely she gave a most glowing description of the young girl which amounted simply to the fact that Doree was one of the most angelic characters she had ever met.

But Max was puzzled. "Why didn't Doree tell me of you?"

"Because I never told her I had met you before," explained Flavia happily. "I thus could get more

enjoyment by drawing out her stories about the big Indian brother." She leaned back to laugh merrily at several amusing recollections. "Is she in Ottawa now?" she asked, again becoming serious.

"Not to-night, but she'll return after two weeks."

"Then you must ask her to call on me," asked Flavia in beautiful appeal. Once more she turned the conversation upon him. "And what is the riverman doing in this musty city?"

"I was the district agent of the Northern Insurance Company," he explained insinuatingly.

What might have come from this turn in the conversation we do not know, as at this moment James Fink broke in upon their talk by requesting her to appoint a number for his dance. It was rude and she granted his wish but in an almost perceptibly cold manner, thus again disappointing his hopes for a part in the conversation.

"I might make a similar request," asserted Max, producing his card. "Your numbers are not yet filled?"

She was plainly taken back by his petition. The thought of his playing the part of anything else but the riverman was not yet firmly impressed upon her; lingering, as it were, about that former picture, she could scarcely conceive how a rude lumber-jack could know anything of these fine arts of the drawing-room; Flavia Chester even anticipated an inglorious performance when he might take her upon the waxed floors. Good form, however, demanded that she accede to his request, even with apparent gladness.

"My seventh number is not taken up," she replied

hesitatingly. Then correcting herself, "no, somehow I forgot my second number: it is a waltz, if you wish to have it."

"With pleasure," he replied, at the same time detecting her apprehensions, together with their cause. "I will endeavor to go through with it to the best of my ability," he finished with a queer smile.

Noticing his almost empty card, she quickly arose. "I must not deter you from getting your dances filled: till the waltz then, farowell," she concluded. "I have a date with Lucy Annette."

"I'll escort you there," suggested her companion.

"Thank you: I accept."

During the intervening time, he could not help but notice how this beautiful young woman was unconsciously drawing the attention of the whole assembly upon her. The female portion warmly received her as a brilliant embellishment to their own select circle, while the gentlemen made manifest efforts to beguile her into conversation. She herself scarcely seemed to be aware of this marked attention but bore a demeanor equally gracious to all.

From her short question about his occupation he concluded that she had not yet been informed of his dismissal.

The time came for the evening's principal enjoyment and nearly all adjourned to the spacious room across the hall-way, where the dancing was to take place. The apartment had no ornaments save the gorgeous draperies of the French windows, and the four magnificent chandeliers that threw their reflection deep into the waxed floor. The general airiness,

the lights, the first tentative notes of the harpers, filled the brilliant assembly with a whirr and a buzz of excitement. The signal was given and Gilbert stepped forward to a simpler dance with Lucy Annette upon his arm. The perfect music and a skilled partner made him enjoy the dance immensely. For one brief second his gaze fell upon Flavia Chester, as she was swinging about in the delightful whirr. Very modestly, however, she lowered her eyes, and did not see him again until he came forward to claim his number. It seemed that never before had he looked forward so interestedly to a dance: it was almost impossible that he should have the pleasure of supporting this beautiful creature for so many minutes.

Her doubts again showed on her face, for it seemed almost inconceivable that a strong lumberman could possess any proficiency in the terpsichorean art.

"I suppose you have taken part in waltzes very frequently," she put out tentatively, even fearfully.

"I have danced three or four times," he responded, not wishing to relieve her.

The harpers practised a few notes. "I believe they'll play that new Venetian importation," she exclaimed, her deep eyes lighting up with enthusiasm. "Have you ever heard it?"

"Yes, once," he replied. "I remember just enough of it to enable me to somewhat anticipate its thought."

In her mind she wished that this knowledge would be of very material aid to him in the present ordeal.

An indescribable thrill passed through Max Gilbert's body as he led this fresh flower below the glare

of the chandeliers, making him wish most sincerely that he might be able to disillusion her as to his abilities.

Then tremulously came the first plaintive bars of the Venetian waltz. Almost fearingly he placed his arm about her and essayed the first steps. The faint perfume of her hair entered his nostrils; her elevating purity cast its spell over him; the music throbbed in full melody, and the dance had begun. Those first few steps already told him that his fair partner was a past master in the art for she turned with the music like the very personification of airiness.

Sweet and low, tenderly sweet, came the notes. Ah, Music, thou subtle spirit! A woman's beauty, the splendor of a crystal falls, the ripple of a meadow brook, are the themes of poets, yet do we not often see them more clearly portrayed in the harmony of a single, beautiful chord? It was but the entry into the elysium of music.

They had not gone many feet, when Flavia Chester turned her head sharply to look into her companion's eyes. The lustrous dark orbs were full of meaning: they asked pardon for her misconception regarding his dancing abilities and bespoke exhilarating joy at the pleasure in prospect. Doree Gilbert's pupil was become a consummate master in the art. Deep down in Flavia's heart, vain curiosity was receding before the current of genuine interest in this unique personality. Yes, he was more than a riverman. She doubted if, in the drawing-rooms across the border, or even those of far-away Europe, she had ever met a character so peculiarly and completely masculine.

Just then the symphony arose to its height and showered forth such a depth of music as the Northern composers alone can create. There was no room for reflection under that warming spell, and, with a languorous look of appreciation, Flavia Chester surrendered herself to the maelstrom of music and joy.

Many an onlooker in the rich assembly had made them the magnet of his attention, for two more perfect dancers could not be found.

Flavia's soul vibrated with the dulcet harmony; dreamily she followed the lure of the music, as soaring still upward, it seemed to strike the very gates of the eternal land. The ethereal notes ministered to them like a thousand invisible spirits that came to uphold even their bodies from the touch of earth. Again a newer wave of harmony swelled forth, tinkling sweetly, whispering, suggesting; now they wandered through sun-kissed meadows and drank in the budding fragrance of the myriad flowers; down majestic rivers passed the strain and almost became lost in their voluminous murmurs. Then forth they came into a land of beautiful cities with golden walls and bejewelled streets, and revelled in their delights. But what beautiful fancies were woven as the magician composer drew them into his own beloved Venetian city. With flushed face, and her youthful head thrown back, Flavia lived the composition with its author: seated in a glittering gondola, she glided swiftly down the shining lagoons, beheld the white palaces of the Doges and saw fair dames in gorgeous raiment 'neath the elegantly wrought porticoes. Venice was en fete: its joyous children mingled their

songs with the lispings waters; verdant festoons joined the shores; and flowers in profusion were being hurled through the summer air. Farther on, a brilliant scene of sunshine and ——

The music had come to an end.

"Is it finished?" she queried breathlessly, as she gazed bewildered about her.

"All too soon," replied Max truthfully, releasing his arm.

"It was the dreamiest dance I've ever had," she remarked, recovering herself, and putting a stray ringlet of dark hair in place.

"There is a ten minute recess, Miss Chester," he explained. "May I escort you to the art gallery?"

She acceded to his request.

"I'll never forget this waltz, Miss Chester," he replied fervently. "You're a perfect dancer."

Somehow the dance had placed them on more familiar terms. "Do you know for what I must ask your pardon?" she asked smilingly.

"I know to what you refer," he answered. "The apologies, though, will not be insisted on."

"My prejudices were gratefully disappointed," she declared.

His imaginings about this girl during the past years had been far outstripped by the reality. She was fairer than he had ever dreamed.

Arrived at the gallery they seated themselves in two large wicker chairs. She now recalled how her father had once informed her of Max Gilbert permanently taking up the insurance business.

"Why did you ever leave the woods?" asked Flavia. Evidently she disliked to close that picture book.

Gilbert leaned back, his eyes glowing with enthusiasm. "Because I love this insurance business," he broke forth with a gesture. "It's a battle royal, a juggling with mighty forces. Every faculty of the man has an opportunity to display itself, acumen, foresight, management, courage, perseverance. It's the grandest business in the world, not even taking a second place to those mighty struggles in our stock exchanges. In fire insurance you oppose yourself not only to the intellect of man but to the elements, fire and lightning, that, by their destructiveness have often emptied the richest company's treasury."

"I see your reason for the change," she responded after his show of enthusiasm. Coming to know the man, she could now scarcely conceive him in any but a combative position; in body and mind he was fitted only for the strenuous life.

To have incurred the enmity of her father was already proof sufficient that he was an opponent of no ordinary mettle.

"You and father are not the best of friends," she began, watching him narrowly.

"There have been some slight differences," he answered significantly. "Those must, however, occur in a business of this nature."

But Flavia Chester was too young and still too much of a woman to spend an evening conjuring with business details. "We're spending too much time talking about insurance," she remarked, artfully

turning her eyes to the wall. "To change the topic, what do you think of that painting?"

The picture was called "The Murmur of the Brook." At first sight nothing was to be seen but a rivulet coursing its way through a sedgy moor. On closer inspection, however, appeared a nymph bending low over the brook; in her hands she held a violin, the notes from which were supposed to be caught by the wavelets and thus give origin to the brook's dulcet murmuring.

One person, perhaps also another, was disagreeably surprised to have James Fink come upon them and intrude himself into their conversation. With a few vacant remarks about the painting, he purposely placed himself between Max and his fair companion. Max was so angered at this manifest ungallantry that he thought it better for the time to consider the picture and take no apparent notice of the man. He was a man too who could control his feelings as his ensuing remarks showed.

"It's a beautiful piece of imagination," answered Max, drawing near for a better view. "The artful position of the nymph implies an exquisitely wrought imagination. Created nature has been made to take on a more poetical aspect, in fact, it has become a thing of life under the artist's brush. Such ideas lend to it a supernatural light from whence man might draw the inspirations for his whole religion. It is the expression of that beautiful idea, which, if pursued, would give us the picture of the Creator: all that He made speaks; the dome of heaven is a vast church, wherein the stars are the candles, and

the mountains the altars. This religion needs no interpretation, but urges us to higher contemplation by its very majesty."

The sentiments, though beautiful, aroused the greatest astonishment in Flavia Chester. The thoughts were like vain graspings for the eternal with an inevitable return to the things of earth.

Fink was less careful than she about the speaker's feelings. "Pure Pantheism" he sneered. "You begin at the wrong end, or better said, you destroy God and set up nature in his place."

"What is your impression, Miss Chester," asked Max, still ignoring the intruder.

"As a work of skill," she answered quietly but nevertheless brilliantly, "I would give it a high place. Imagination plays a beautiful part in the picture, while the coloring and lines are true and well done. Considered as a work of art, it has its faults; being totally untrue, it lacks sincerity; there are no nymphs existing, neither do the waters derive their murmur in that manner. Then at best, it could take only second if not third rank by reason of its choice of subject. Your external senses are delighted and so is your imagination, but a good deal more is required to draw out your whole being. Wherever such is not the result, you have not perfection. You might stand before that picture for hours and still never gain one noble supernatural thought, one elevating sentiment. Your thoughts, like your eyes, remain on the paint. The picture, though done in modern times, is very much akin to the religion of pagan days. The Greeks and the Romans conceived such ideas in attempting

to build up a supernatural religion. In spite of their best efforts, their nymphs would cling to their groves, their gods to their battle-axes: the purely holy, which is the essential of true religion, was never attained. The result was empty, material, make-belief, providing delight by its unreality, and staving off all practical betterment."

She glanced at Max to assure herself of his undivided attention. That look convinced him that the third party was intruding. "Thus it is also here," she continued. "The artist endeavored a high flight into ethereal regions, but produced nothing better than a wingless, halo-less, non-existent angel."

"Will you come over here?" she suggested, "so that we may compare this with another painting."

She led him before a copy of the world-famous "Transfiguration". Fink followed. It was during the ensuing explanation that Max took a look at Fink to see an open sneer playing upon his face. Most probably his small soul was offended at the workings of Flavia Chester's pure mind. It was enough to make the riverman recall a little expedient of the olden days. He began to edge toward the new district agent and awaited his opportunity.

"Don't you immediately feel a different sentiment in gazing upon this wonderful painting?" she was saying, with one slender hand upraised. "Viewing it for merely five minutes is a lesson, a sermon; every figure tells you its story, bids you look upward to your true end, which is heaven. The longer you gaze upon it, the holier and profounder will be your thoughts. This is a painting with a true purpose,

producing present beneficial effects in the beholder. It bears all the marks required for greatness of style, noble choice, sincerity, beauty and invention. Corresponding fully with these requisites of true art, it calls upon our whole humanity and is worthy of being called the greatest work of art the world knows," she concluded, with animation.

She had not finished when Fink found his hand in a vicelike grip, the while he gazed into a countenance strong with righteous rage. Quickly and so very painfully he found himself twisted about till he faced the door. Then a voice breathed into his ear, "Out at once before you receive worse treatment." The man had enough comprehension to realize that obedience was the better way of extricating himself from the difficulty, and sullenly he made his exit.

"Very sorry that you must leave," Max called after him in order to keep the disagreeable nature of the incident from Flavia Chester.

It was indeed done in a moment yet not so quickly that the eye of his companion did not notice that something unusual had just transpired. Somehow she knew that this strong man in his own ready way had saved her from molestation, and she gave him a look startled perhaps but giving also the faintest hint of gratitude.

"You would be a skilful guide in an art gallery," remarked Max honestly but with forced cheer. "I would never have thought of looking at the picture in that light: it is remarkable what a story can be told about a single painting."

The room had in the meantime become well filled with people.

"I see a partner for the next dance wending his way to our position," she remarked meanly. "That means the end of our conversation." By a little word she had saved the situation.

"It has been a wonderful pleasure," declared Max Gilbert.

Just then the young man advanced to claim his number.

CHAPTER NINE.

SOMEBODY SHOWS INTEREST.

Pressing social duties did not prevent Flavia Chester giving frequent thought to the man of such strange personality who once more had crossed the pathway of her life. Her beauty naturally won many admirers, yet whether monied or titled, these all for the time had lost distinctiveness in the ordinary multitude. None of them were for her so singular and interesting a study as the man from the river. Was it Max Gilbert's splendid physique, mysterious unknown past, his strange religious ideas, or his strong character, that generated this interest?—she could not well explain. Perhaps it was rather their combination which made him for the present hold her attentions.

A month had already elapsed, and she had neither seen nor even heard of him. However, he was so strange withal, so advanced in some ideas and so backward in others, so strange of sentiment, that he might by now have forgotten the brief acquaintance of the drawing room. Again, an extended trip, as was frequently necessitated by his business, could also explain such absence.

Having a certain evening to herself, she strolled into the drawing room to play a selection from a few of her favorite operas. In the center of the room, one elbow resting on a small table, sat her father

busily engaged in reading the daily paper. Flavia Chester was on this particular evening possessed of a wandering mood, for instrumentals not suiting her whim, she changed to singing a few verses of academy days. Finally she ran her fingers over the keys to signify her abandonment of that recreation, and walking to a sofa which rested against the wall, facing her father, she threw herself down upon it.

"What's the matter, Flavia?" asked her father, looking at her over his paper. "You seem to be restless."

"No," she answered, raising her head sufficiently to rest it in the palm of her hand. "I just want to talk."

"To talk," he ejaculated, smiling. "What do you wish to talk about to-night?"

"I want to know something about your business," she stated; "I haven't heard a word about it since my return."

A somewhat unwilling look gathered on her father's face, as laying aside his paper, he prepared to converse with her. "Oh, the business; it's in the finest possible shape."

"Is that remarkable increase still continuing?" she inquired.

"Yes, we're firmly established now," he answered emphatically; "the older English companies have lost very much ground here in Ottawa and Hull."

"And all this within three years," ejaculated Flavia. "Your district agent, Gilbert, must be an indefatigable worker, a great organizer," she continued, gazing more intently upon her father.

Chester had hoped to remain with generalities, and was hardly prepared for just such a topic as the last. "Well," he drolled, "he did do quite a bit of work, but shareholders are after all the real bulwark of an organization."

She had noticed a look of displeasure on his face when mention was made of Gilbert's name.

"A man in his position, though," she protested mildly, "must have a pretty broad and effective knowledge in order to keep abreast of the times."

"It's a fact, Gilbert hasn't," he retorted somewhat sharply, moving one knee over the other. "He can figure, read, write, and deal in Indian mythology when he's excited, but beyond that his knowledge amounts to nil. The man is, furthermore, so stubborn that he doesn't wish to learn. I don't think he'd thank you if you taught him what made a street car go."

"There may, nevertheless, be an advantage in that," persisted Flavia. "By not scattering his energies into too many channels, he puts so much more strength into the few. It may have the effect of making him a one-idea man, a specialist; and some say they are the most successful."

Words, smacking of praise for his greatest enemy, were decidedly disagreeable to Chester. Plunging one hand suddenly into his pocket, he came out with the broad remark: "He's a nuisance."

"Why, father!" responded Flavia, rising somewhat from her reclining position, "You seem to have a veritable hatred for this man; has he ever done

you any harm?" she questioned, bringing her eyes together in close scrutiny.

"Yes, I hate him," he answered, now past all prudence. "He's my greatest enemy, and will be to my dying day. Since our first meeting he has made himself such, and time has but strengthened our mutual dislike."

Upon further questioning, he narrated from the beginning, all the circumstances which had provoked this animosity.

"Is that all?" It strikes me as a pure difference in business, into which no personal element should enter," she replied in a manner hinting at defense. "As long as your company is succeeding, the more prudent part would be to forget former enmities; they might in a critical moment cause a permanent rupture." Apparently she had not grasped the full meaning of her father's explanation.

Chester grinned sardonically, "Permanent rupture!" he exclaimed in sinister tones, "That has already come to pass."

Those portentous words brought Flavia Chester to an upright position, her lustrous eyes showing alarm and suspicion at a thought, as yet only half understood.

"You don't mean,—" she was about to say.

"Yes," interjected her father, taking unpaternal delight in her consternation. "About fourteen months ago I succeeded in ousting Max Gilbert from his position as district agent of the Northern."

"And who is the district agent now?" she breathed,

for her senses were still too distracted for calm thought.

"James Fink."

"Flavia Chester's eyes narrowed perceptibly, while her classic face became a study of deep thought. That this strongly masculine figure, embellished by her fancy to the degree of romance, should come to grief so soon after their acquaintance? Everything was so totally unexpected,—and that her father should be the voluntary perpetrator of this unholy revenge! Remembering Gilbert's graphic description of his insurance business, she could in a manner understand the cruel nature of the blow. Was there not perhaps a remote possibility of his reinstatement? A certain latent force in the man had appealed to her, to make her wonder now if being despoiled of what he loved most, would not cause it to burst forth with thrilling, terrible might.

"Did he yield without opposition?" she asked, looking up suddenly.

Flavia's further remark, though not meant for his ears, only infuriated him the more: "To think that the business world considers such acts just!" she ruminated in a low tone.

Not caring to express his anger in words, he skillfully decoyed her into a channel where more permanent satisfaction was to be had.

"What was your impression of this man the evening you met him at the ball?" he asked with pressing irrelevance.

"Mr. Gilbert proved himself not only interesting in his conversation, but in his whole manner of act-

ing," she responded freely, and with a certain defiance.

"The events just narrated have of course placed him beyond the pale of your further acquaintance," he asserted in heavy tones, which left no doubt as to their sincerity. "I do not wish to imply that even a friendship has sprung up between you but it is no harm to remark that I would be very much displeased should I ever hear of your again conversing with Max Gilbert."

Flavia Chester kept her father's gaze closely, almost defiantly at that statement. Since further argument could, however, only entail disagreeable consequences, she prudently ended the conversation by resuming her former seat at the piano.

This startling disclosure claimed a great part of the girl's reflections during the next few days. Now she understood the reticence of her friends upon this important matter. Either they had supposed her in full possession of the incident, or did not care to discuss a topic whose justice was at least dubious. The natural curiosity of her feminine nature, however, craved for the rehearsal of the story from a less partisan source than her father. She did not cease to wonder whether this would not after all only occasion an outburst of that admirable quality she could not help but link with his personality. A recent long visit to New York explained why she had not seen the newspaper accounts of the organization of the "Western World".

Next morning early Flavia repaired to the home of her friend, Lucy Annette, to obtain fuller details

of the rupture between her father and Max Gilbert. Lucy was of course very ready to allow her volubility to flow into the channel of this much talked-of topic. As Flavia had surmised, her father had only informed her of the barest details of the first scene in this drama; not a word had been said of the daring formation of the "Western World". Only now she received the great story of combat, of energy, of revenge. With each step of the explanation her wonderment increased as did also her admiration for the strange organizer. Who else could ever have attempted such a vast undertaking? The story, however, was still too new to give her a clear vision of the storm which would center about her own father.

CHAPTER TEN.

ANOTHER METHOD.

Dick Kildare had arrived as per schedule. As we might expect he rushed into the business as if indeed the whole hemisphere had to belong to the "Western World" within six months, if not sooner.

In character Dick had not changed a whit; he was the same cheerful, comely gentleman as we found him upon first acquaintance, able to enter any new circle with as familiar a grace as if he had never known another. At first glance, Doree had perceived that all descriptions of the young man were not in the least exaggerated. Within a week she was full master of his delightful eccentricities, knowing exactly what method to pursue in order to elicit his most brilliant flashes of wit and repartee.

It was three weeks after his arrival that the incident occurred which shall form the theme of this chapter. Max had just called Dick into his office. "Will you call on a man by the name of Withers who lives to the east of the city?" he asked. "I see by the little red book that his policy in the 'Northern' is expiring within a month".

Max knew of course that the highly imaginative temperament of his agent made him more than usually susceptible to the varying fortunes of insurance warfare. He saw furthermore how on this

morning Dick was in especially fine fettle and that a word of advice would not be amiss.

"Never become angry at a business reversal," Max Gilbert counselled him. "Do not answer a refusal with a harsh word lest you create a permanent chasm between yourself and that man's future business."

"But look at the fun you're missing by such angelic conduct," Dick smilingly remonstrated. "I guess you're right though. I wonder if I'll have need of your advice this morning for I've determined to wrest Wither's policy from the 'Northern' within the next hour or so."

"Then be on your way," finished Max, "only have a care for Withers, for he's a very old character. Here's the little red book; you may find some more expirations in that section."

Only the little red books could explain how it was possible for Max to cover so much ground in those days, and work it so thoroughly and so successfully. That strenuous labor over the policy registers of the "Northern" was now receiving its rewards for he was always in certainty when working against his principal opponent never needing a preparatory call for dates of expiration and other data. When the fixed time arrived, Max Gilbert was there, exhorting, urging and arguing. And he was proving himself a redoubtable aggressor, one who was already threatening the very existence of the ancient "Northern".

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon that Dick's canvassing brought him before a large, three and a half story, red brick dwelling. Three men were busily engaged shingling the kitchen roof, while

Withers, the proprietor, was just drawing up a light wagon with several squares of shingles. Now, Withers, plainly said, was a fool amidst plenty, living in blissful ignorance of his lack of gray matter, and in general considering himself the intellectual equal of any man. It was, however, upon insurance agents that he especially delighted to exploit his supposed genius; his invariable plan was to draw out their best controversial powers by a hundred tentative questions, and when their hopes of business were enthused to the highest notch, to remark blandly that he had just reinsured last week.

A nod from Withers had given the workmen the permission to descend from the roof and watch the progress of his deeply laid plot. The climax came and Dick was for a moment taken back by the deliberate trick which had been served on him. But Withers had reckoned without his host, for recovering himself shortly, the agent determined to repay this trifler with as cold a deception as had just been practiced on himself.

"That makes no difference whatever," declared Dick with a forced gaiety that concealed his deeper intent, "and just proves your own superior prudence. The primary object of my call was to place a certain well-paying proposition before your consideration."

Withers grew interested at once, for his lack of common sense made him very open to soft snaps and soap-bubble schemes.

Dick began with marked gravity. "You've most probably read in the papers how thousands upon thousands of dollars are being invested in this new

company. The greatest financiers now admit that those sums will reap tremendous dividends in the very near future." The voice and mien of a prophet seemed to come over the young narrator as he advanced with his topic. "All that," he continued, "suffers no comparison with the splendid opportunity we are offering to the next hundred who insure with us."

"I do hear about immense dividends certain stock companies have paid," interposed Withers, thinking it time to display his intelligence of the subject.

"Many pay an annual dividend of 2000%," assisted Dick. He could himself scarcely restrain a gasp at the palpable untruth.

Withers had of course read this and more, hinting at the conclusion that, in the event of a good proposition, it would not be difficult to have all his policies in other companies cancelled.

"What you've read is almost like my proposition," asserted Dick, "although this scheme has added a few improvements on every former conception." Perceiving a shadow of doubt on his client's face, Dick approached him confidentially. "You wonder how we can prove the truth of our words! Does any man know from whence our manager came?" he spoke, lowly and mysteriously. "Who knows how vast is the credit of this wonderful man, this Canadian Monte Christo? I do, Mr. Withers, and it is therefore that I can safely make this proposition to you."

The handsome face, flushed with eloquence, was driving Withers's estimation of a certain man to the

highest point. The very mystery of the answer had obliterated every doubt.

"What is your proposal?" he inquired, fretting under the suspense.

Dick almost touched noses with him as he divulged the wonderful scheme. "First of all, we'll insure you for half of the usual rate," he explained. Then with rising voice, he continued, "That yearly payment however will be considered an investment, for which we guarantee to pay you 1000% dividend at the end of the first year, 2000% at the end of the second, continuing to double this until it has reached the 10,000 figure, where it will remain stationary unless unprecedented luck should enable us to keep up the increase. For example if you invest a hundred dollars now, we will return you a thousand dollars at the end of the first year, and so on, until you are annually the happy receiver of ten thousand dollars for your hundred dollar investment.

The doubts in Wither's mind were rising as rapidly as bubbles in a clear spring.

"What!" expostulated Dick, in anticipation of a question. "Do you think that the representatives of this thirtieth century company can afford to waste their time with nonsense? I am not through yet. Listen! Our manager desires your participation so strongly, that he bade me say a private messenger will annually convey the ten thousand dollars to your home, thus saving you the trouble of calling at the bank."

"One more minute," pleaded Dick with restraining hand as he perceived the rising choler in the list-

ener's face. "Lastly, the manager and I will be so flattered by your acceptance, that we will consider ourselves under the strictest obligation to call here every week for the purpose of mowing your lawn and performing any other little job which you may desire." Then after a brief pause, he concluded dryly, "Yes, we'll mow your lawn when grass grows in the winter, and shows four feet above the snow."

The laborers were already smiling to one another as they perceived the trick justly served on their employer. Withers was not in such a jovial state of mind and, deeply humiliated, answered that long speech with such a volley of anathemas as would have done credit to a parrot whose ultimate sale depended entirely on his proficiency in that art.

While all agents and one in particular was undergoing this lingual chastisement, Dick was unconcernedly examining the hoof of Wither's horse.

"Those feet need better manicuring," he interrupted, as if perfect calm existed. "I would advise Axminster carpet to be placed in the stall." Then straightening, he spoke with a sternness that surprised the listeners. "Do you know under what conditions I'd insure you, Withers? First you'd have to use a false name for your signature, pay me a thousand dollars every year to keep the negotiation a secret, while another thousand dollars' forfeit would assure your burning the tell-tale papers before your lamentable death. How much would be charged for my waste of time, it is better not to mention, lest the figures startle you into common sense."

An even more abusive round of language came in

answer, Withers even threatening the agent with bodily chastisement.

"How long will you keep that up?" asked Dick, derisively.

"A week, if it suits you."

"Then you may quit for I am weak already."

"Hang you, do you dare to talk that way to me on my property? You—you—you— I know more than you and your whole family."

"You're one of those 'gems of purest ray serene'," interposed Dick. "That may be too difficult for your intellect to follow, but it's lucky for mankind that the old ocean doesn't vomit forth all its hidden jewels."

"I'll sic my dog on you," bellowed Withers, beside himself with rage.

"Bring your dog," teased Dick, "and I'll bite him." Becoming serious once more, he continued, "The only reason why I've wasted your time thus, is because of an announcement in the weather column, that a heavy rain will undoubtedly strike the city this evening and continue for three days without interruption. Had you talked sense at the start, you would have saved all this time and been able to complete the shingling of your roof before the rain. I hope you'll enjoy the experience of a flooded house to-night. Good-day."

Dick Kildare felt eminently satisfied with himself as about an hour afterwards, he called at the Gilbert home to make his report.

"Max will return in a few minutes," Doree answered. "Come in and wait."

"Had you a successful day?" she inquired after his entry, in a manner proving that not the slightest strangeness existed between the two.

"A wonderful day," he replied, passing before her into the parlor. He had scarcely seated himself, however, when he burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

Doree took a position directly before him and with arms akimbo gazed humorously upon the scene. "Which institution for the non-intellectuals would you prefer?" she asked in mocked gravity. "Or has the malady proceeded so far, that legally you have no more voice in the matter?" Still there was no cessation.

"I demand the reason of this excessive mirth in the prisoner," she declared.

"Doree, I could never tell," he was at length able to answer.

Now if he had made such declarations already a hundred times, this was also the hundredth time that he yielded to her pleading to narrate faithfully his whole experience with the infuriated Withers.

"That man hasn't enough brains to get a distraction," he finished hilariously.

"And will it really rain for a week?" she asked innocently at the end of the narrative.

"No, I just wished to frighten him," he explained. "Withers believed it though, for upon looking back I beheld him and the three workmen nailing on shingles as diligently as if the deluge of Noah's time was about to be repeated."

"That's fibbing," she blithely declared, holding up her finger.

"No, Doree, that's just plain lying," was his rejoinder.

The noise of footsteps on the portico told them just then that the master of the house had come home from his journey. The sister could, of course, not wait for his entry but went out to give him her joyful greeting.

Max had scarcely taken his seat with them, when the maid announced, "Supper's ready."

"Have supper with us to-night, Dick," he declared, "you haven't given us that pleasure for a full week."

Dick turned humorously to the sister. "That this will not appear so prearranged, you add your supplications to your brother's, and I'll pretend I'm considering the matter."

"Alright, you'll stay, won't you?" she responded gaily, as she rose from her chair.

"That wasn't the way," Dick protested; "you began at the wrong end. I'll probably have to stay though," he concluded, only apparently disconsolate.

CHAPTER ELEVEN.

DAKOTAH CRAFT.

Chester and his principal agent Fink sat one evening in the private office discussing the general condition of affairs. Chester was fingering nervously with an electric light stand on the desk, his drawn features giving evidence of none too pleasant feelings.

"This drain on our business will ruin us," he muttered. "Your labors must soon show better results, Fink."

"Better!" exclaimed Fink rather angrily, "What more can I do?"

"Gilbert is taking away all our business and you're not able to prevent it," continued Chester.

"I'm not the reason," Fink sullenly replied. "Your own personality, your own acts are the cause of this great desertion in our ranks."

"Take care, Fink," declared Chester in a low tone, "you're after all only an agent."

"I don't care if I am," he retorted, leaning forward with flashing eyes. "These people are leaving not because of me, but because they hate you: they've lost respect for you on account of the way you ousted Gilbert from his position. You never dreamed the man had so many friends, but the sequel proves that they can be counted by the thousands. Our life-long members are turning away in disgust; the entire cities of Ottawa and Hull are aroused against you."

"Let them think what they like," replied Chester fiercely, coming to a more tense position. "I'd do it again if I had the chance, for I hate him with all my soul." Then changing his tone, "But let's have no differences on this matter. We're both implicated. Let's keep up the battle. All is not lost yet by any means."

That remark somewhat assuaged Fink's injured feelings, so settling into his chair once more, he asked "How much business has he taken from you thus far?"

"It's a terrible amount," answered Chester moodily, "running into the millions."

"We thought he was working hard for the Northern," strengthened Fink, "but the energies he displayed then suffer no comparison with those he is now putting forth."

"To-morrow afternoon will be a luckier day," remarked Fink purposely to draw his employer's thoughts into a brighter channel.

"How can that be?" asked Chester dubiously, and without raising his head.

"This morning a friend of mine returned from Hull with the information that a heavy holder of real estate in that city will have six big policies expiring within a month. The six covering one of the finest blocks in Hull will mean an insurance of about thirty thousand dollars."

"That'll mean a big lift in our present unsatisfactory progress," answered the manager brightening up. "When do you leave for Hull?"

"To-morrow afternoon."

* * * *

About an hour after this interview, Dick Kildare ran into Gilbert's home office in a manner to indicate the possession of some very important news.

"Max," he exclaimed scarcely able to repress his laughter, "that Fink is a wonder."

"What's the matter now, Dick?" inquired the other.

"He thinks that lack of wisdom is the only requirement for the children of light," continued Dick.

Max stood in a quizzical attitude at his side. "Impart your news and we'll try to join in the laugh."

"You know that Fink is overly fond of bragging," he began more seriously. "Well, this morning he tried to take away one of our policy holders, and to make his argument strong, he told him of a large risk he would take in Hull to-morrow afternoon. "Dick struck the desk with his hand. "Max, the first agent on the scene will undoubtedly capture all those policies."

"When does Fink leave for Hull?" inquired the manager again with great interest.

"To-morrow afternoon."

"All right, Dick, then I'll leave for Hull early in the morning. Perhaps I can transact a little business before my opponent arrives on the scene."

"You're taking no rest at all these days," remarked Doree who had just entered looking fresh as a flower in a delightful dress of light green.

"It can't be helped, Doree; there's a big amount of business at stake."

"Max," she declared perplexedly as she clung to him in her dear old way, "you've changed terribly these last seventeen months. Everything but insurance is forgotten, and it's nothing but business from morning till night. Do you know that you are sadly in need of a hair cut?" she finished blithely.

Surprised Max passed his hand over his head. "I believe you're right, although I'll not have time to attend to my tonsorial needs until my return."

"And then you'll forget again," she corrected kindly.

"That's the way with us business men," interrupted the mirthful Dick, "for I also am forgetting everything of late: only this very morning I forgot to get up in time, and yesterday at the restaurant I forgot to quit until the proprietor consoled me with the remark that another meal would be served at supper."

"Yours is a very distressing case, Dick," she gaily answered. "Should the symptoms appear again, I would advise your consulting a doctor who specializes on sloth."

"It's sad," quoted Dick. "There's a danger that I may be cut off even in the blossom of my youth."

"No danger, Dick," she answered. "The good die young; you will undoubtedly see a ripe old age."

"According to that argument," he answered, "I'll be as immortal as Shakespeare. Thus will result the result the result, and in the end thus will it end."

Doree turned to her brother, "If you're leaving so early, you must spend the evening with Dick and myself in the parlor."

"I can't spare the time, Doree. There's work awaiting me in the office."

"But you must," she pleaded lovingly, taking him by the lapel of his coat. "You haven't spent an evening with me for ever so long."

He never could resist her pleading. "Then I submit to your authority. Yours but to command," he bowed graciously.

That evening was for him like the long-absent warrior's return to the fireside. Doree and Dick were both cheerful entertainers and with their playing and singing they made the moments fly on golden wings.

"Shall I sing you a hymn, Max?" asked Doree.

"Sing what you wish," he responded kindly. "I like all your songs."

Intense pressure of business had caused the rising towers of Max Gilbert's faith to remain in a truncated condition. To-night sweet angels were endeavoring to continue their construction, before the hurry of the world again seized him in its toils.

Most perfectly did Doree interpret the plaintive sighing of a soul, which having long since learned the fleeting nature of things terrestrial, looks forward only to the infinite Goodness, to the embrace of its dear spouse, Jesus Christ. Up and down rose the wonderful melody, as a dove which flies again and again toward the white bars that hold its heavenly lover.

Invariably these hymns plunged Max Gilbert into sad reveries, for however he might dupe himself on

his state of soul, he was forced at times to see its utter barrenness.

The sweet song came to an end, and the singer advancing towards Max, seated herself on a footstool at his side. The conversation was long and happy that evening reminding her of the time before the formation of the new company.

"We'll just see what the gods have arranged for us this morning," was Max Gilbert's strange thought as he boarded the car next morning. The long years with the Dakotak had not left him untouched by a fatalism which regards all natural and even personal phenomena as the instigations of unseen spirits hovering everywhere about him; a myriad invisible hands directed his steps to weal or woe, yea, even controlled his inmost thoughts.

The wealthy real estate owner was a rather eccentric farmer, Jabez Nicholson, who lived to the east of one of the parks in Hull. Arrived at the end of the car line, Max continued the rest of the journey on foot. Another long walk to the rear of the farm was necessary where Max found his perspective client busily engaged in ploughing. He was a dapper individual with two very dark eyes that flashed nervously from an angular countenance.

"Good morning, Mr. Nicholson," began Max as the rich farmer brought his team to a stop.

"Good morning, and who are you?" was the quick retort. "Can't say that I ever saw you before."

"I am Max Gilbert, manager of the Western World."

"Yes, I remember you now. And what can you want of me?"

"I just thought I'd make a little business call this morning," answered Max in very pacific tones. "Six of the policies on your city block, I understand, are expiring within a month. You had always been insured in a foreign concern, so I hoped this morning to convince you to patronize a home industry."

"You're correct about their expiration," answered Nicholson quickly, "but I am insured with an English company, and there I remain." The word "Get up" to the horses, was evidence sufficient that the matter was ended.

Max's highly developed perspicacity had at once detected that the farmer's temperament was decidedly of the nervous variety. Nicholson's greatest trouble was the fear of being persuaded against his will: to forestall such vacillation, he invariably expedited his business affairs, endeavoring to make the first answer also the final one.

"You heard my answer, didn't you?" queried the rich farmer, as completing a furrow he found the agent standing at the same place.

"To be sure I did," graciously replied Max. "It is rather late though to return to the city for dinner and also inconvenient on account of my having to make another call further out, so if it's not troubling you too much, I'd like to make a claim on your hospitality."

The boggy to Nicholson's fears seemed to have vanished. "You are welcome to remain with us," he responded more gently. "Just wait a few minutes

though till I complete another round, then we'll both walk to the house together."

"Suppose I complete that round for you?" suggested Gilbert, reaching for a small straw of hope.

"What can an insurance manager know about ploughing?" asked Nicholson sharply and with evident surprise. "You're all afraid of dirtying your cuffs. Hang me though, if I don't let you try it."

Max Gilbert had certainly never ploughed in his life but in the present instance he trusted that his general experience with horses, as learned at the camp, would enable him to perform the operation creditably; neither did the attempt belie any accomplishment he possessed in that department.

"Pretty good," commented the farmer as Max completed the double furrow, "although your turn could have been smoother. Where did you learn to plough?"

"I never ploughed in my life."

"You didn't! Then you handle horses uncommonly well."

"Perhaps the horses should receive more credit than I. That's the best team I've driven for a long time," explained Gilbert. "Everything you own seems to be of the same variety. It's my opinion that your block is the finest on the street."

"Yes, I do keep it in ship-shape condition," drawled the farmer visibly pleased.

"You would of course have it well protected by insurance," hazarded the manager with great concern.

They were now walking side by side down the lane, the horses clanking in their harness before them.

"At present there is about 22,000 dollars insurance on the building; the tenants of course carry their own insurance on their contents."

The bogey of being put to his perseverance was once more rising before Nicholson's anxious mind. By every conceivable comment on the surrounding crops and scenery, he attempted to lead the manager from his course. The task was in vain: for somehow all wheat and oats became mere barter for city blocks one of which badly needed insuring in the company acclaiming Max Gilbert as manager.

Arrived at the barn, Max once more showed his departure from the "clean cuff" variety of business men by assisting the farmer to unhitch.

"It's a stout structure," he remarked, gazing at the long row of stalls, after the horses were stabled. "Have we time to take a walk through the upper part?"

"Sure: come along," replied Nicholson. "The wife will halloo when it's time for dinner."

During that tour of inspection, a certain complacent feeling was weaving itself in warming folds about the farmer's heart, a phenomenon of which he could not directly explain the cause. The reason lay in the delicate praises of the manager which were mingled so judiciously with commonplace remarks, as scarcely to be capable of detection. A friend was won, but not yet a customer.

Gilbert attempted a sudden bold turn. "You need fully \$8,000 more insurance on your property. I'll

write you a policy for that amount with the full assurance that the directors will not raise the slightest objection."

"Not to-day, Mr. Gilbert: I'll never insure with your company."

A protracted halloo from the house, announced that dinner was ready.

Mrs. Nicholson proved a most affable personage, with no inclination to nervousness like her better half. A little girl aged perhaps six years clung to her skirts as she was being introduced.

"That's a fine looking young miss," remarked Max of the child. "And what's your name?" he asked kindly, bending over her.

"My name—is—is—is Alice," she responded demurely.

"Alice, that's a fine name," he declared. "You'll soon be helping your mother now, Alice."

The fond mother beholding such interest in her own, was at that psychological moment undergoing the same complacent and indescribable sentiments as had almost enervated her husband a few minutes previously.

"You may sit here, Mr. Gilbert," she suggested, drawing out his chair. Then turning to Alice, "You eat in the kitchen, dear, like a good girl."

"No, Alice, you sit beside me," protested Max. "I am sure we'll get along splendidly."

"Have a cake, Alice," he suggested after grace.

"M-m-m," mumbled the child, vainly trying to place a smile into a mouth that only puckered up with bashfulness.

The recognition of such graciousness at once made the mother a willing ally of the aggressive manager. "What is your profession?" she asked sweetly.

"Insurance, Mrs. Nicholson. I am the manager of the 'Western World'."

Now he had always harassed his prospective client sufficiently, so he considered it wise not to make the ensuing conversation bear directly upon the present issue. The generalities, however, to which he gave expression, were significant enough for the listener to draw his pertinent conclusions.

Then a little lad who had not appeared for dinner, entered to divert their thoughts. "Pa," he began with woe-begone face, "four of our white Leghorn chickens got killed."

"What?" exclaimed Nicholson rising. "That must have been done last night. I must see to this."

"I'm curious myself," declared Max, "so I'll go with you."

The two soon arrived at the high picket fence which formed an enclosure to one side of the hen-coop.

"Ye holy cornstalks!" grasped Nicholson gazing at the feather-strewn ground. "That must surely have been a dog."

"Scarcely," ventured Gilbert. "I would judge that a fox had visited your hen-coop."

Nicholson surveyed his corrector for a moment wondering of what irrelevant subject this man would next claim some knowledge.

Spying a yellow hair on the ground, Max picked it up. "That proves my theory," he declared.

The farmer was credulous, but unconvinced. Why can't that belong to a yellow dog? There are plenty of such marauders on this concession."

"Feel it," suggested Max. "Only a fox has such fine hair."

Nicholson followed his advice, but failed to notice any great specific difference. "The man who can detect that, is a wonder. If a fox has created this mischief, I'd very much appreciate to have him shot."

"Get me a gun and I'll shoot him for you," was the bold statement that next came to Nicholson's ears.

"He's not here to shoot," he protested in perplexity, "and there's not a single fox hole in any bush."

Max Gilbert had noticed that a rain of the previous night had still left the ground somewhat damp; this circumstance, he hoped, would enable him to put into practice an art learned many years before in the trackless forests of Keewatin.

Only for a rising estimation of this man's prowess, the farmer would never have fetched a gun. Outside of the enclosure, Max had already discovered several more hairs which he held up to Nicholson's gaze when the latter returned.

"Here he leaped on top of the fence," asserted Gilbert whose every faculty was now alive with the re-awakened thrill of Dakotah days.

That statement was a puzzle to Nicholson. "How do you know that he didn't go through?"

"Because there's no mark in the grass on the other side. A slight dropping of dust from under these crowning slabs further proves my supposition."

To himself Nicholson said, "Is this a white man or an Indian?"

Following the fence for a hundred yards, Max suddenly stopped and pointed to the grass. "At this point he leaped from the fence; now we'll be able to proceed a little faster."

"Faster!" objected the astounded farmer, "now you'll stop; no man can follow a fox's tracks after twelve hours."

The resuscitated Indian made no reply, but for the next half hour used all his wonderful skill in making out the indentures of the quadruped upon the damp earth. The stoic of the northern woods said not a word but at times proceeded so rapidly that his companion had work sufficient to keep abreast.

At length the doubting farmer came to a halt. "You're leading me on a wild-goose chase; you can't see a thing."

"See here and here," answered Max somewhat nettled, but still anxious to keep his companion confident.

"Can't see a thing," replied Nicholson vainly endeavoring to discern the foot prints.

Ten feet further an exultant cry broke from the tracker's lips while he displayed three feathers to the farmer's astonished gaze.

"Guess I'll follow a while longer," was the sage response.

A few minutes afterwards they entered neighbor Johnson's bush where Max Gilbert pointed to a hole not thirty feet distant.

"Holy Cornstalks!" exclaimed Nicholson in gen-

uine admiration. "You're the best Indian I've ever seen."

"Hide behind that tree," commanded Max. "Where do you wish me to hit him?"

"An inch below the left ear," answered Nicholson for further test.

Max himself secured a nearer position behind a charred log, when a strange sound came from his lips, that might be the imitation of a partridge or of some other bird known to himself alone. From the hole, probably in answer, a noise was heard like the rolling of a pebble. The next instant a loud report rang out and Brer Fox's dead body lay stretched across the opening.

Nicholson ran excitedly forward. "Exactly an inch below the left ear," he exclaimed with undoubted admiration. "You're a wonder."

The conversation as they tramped home with their prize, proved that the client was completely conquered. Nevertheless with such a nervous nature, a last bit of diplomacy was necessary, namely that the coming business must be transacted in a matter of fact way, as if indeed no argument had preceded.

Taking his seat at the table, Max drew forth pen, ink and six applications.

"Would \$30,000 evenly divided amongst six policies be enough," asked the manager most carelessly.

"I guess that's about correct," was the slow response.

"You may sign on these lines," came a moment afterwards in a tone betokening an apparent fore-

gone conclusion. The "imperative" would in this instance have been very impolitic.

Asked afterwards why he had given his insurance to the "Western World", Nickolson replied, "I simply was forced to it, or take the alternative of boarding Gilbert for a week. It looked like rain too, and that field needed immediate ploughing."

CHAPTER TWELVE.

AT THE FORK IN THE WATERS.

Max selected the walk through the park homeward. Even if the recent far-reaching victory had not lighted up his face with pleasure, the perfect day which greeted him must surely have elicited his most sanguine feelings. All about him stretched delightful alternations of walks and drives winding 'mid shrubs and clustered woodland where twittering birds announced the advent of nature's choicest season. He had but entered upon a serpentine path bordering the Ottawa, when around a bend in the distance he perceived a slender figure whose superb carriage denoted none other than his acquaintance of the drawing room. She had disappeared from view now, but Max knew that their course would eventually bring them face to face.

Flavia Chester had simultaneously become aware of the other's presence. At the same time the stern words of her father were recalled to her mind, but somehow the mandate did not provoke her immediate obedience.

They met and clasped hands. Below them splashed the mighty Ottawa, the only sound that broke the stillness during the first moment of their meeting.

"I am very sorry that I could never call on you after the ball," began Max, "but all my plans about that time were diverted by circumstances over which

I had no control. You understand of course that such an attempt would have proved very awkward for all parties concerned. I hoped nevertheless to meet you accidentally sometime, even as this morning."

Her eyes sought the ground as he thus gave faint expression to his interior feelings. "I'm sorry too," she replied toying in the sand with her parasol. "I'm sorry that this catastrophe should have come upon you. You yourself told me how much you were enamoured with the business, and this in a manner prepared me to understand how deep must have been your grief at its loss." A more tender expression found birth in her wonderful eyes with these words.

"We can regret an incident without being entirely downcast by the result," he replied hintingly. "Misfortune destroys the weak, tries the indifferent, strengthens the strong. It only remains for me to prove to which of these catagories I belong."

"Would it not have made the future less combative if you had chosen another city for your operations?" she asked trying to gain time for thought. "Success could have been attained more agreeably if not also more certainly."

"I never considered such a step," he returned glad of her interest. "In no other city beside Ottawa would there have been the incentive to the efforts I am now making."

"I understand," she replied now more desolately. "Exteriorly this struggle seems to be a purely business one, but beneath the surface there are only two men engaged. Indeed your spirit has

permeated whole cities, and everywhere there are rival camps arising. Success may be a certain palliative but the creation of so many enmities can certainly not afford any lasting consolation."

"Too much activity always begets enemies," he hinted. "We do not regret the loss of every friend, only some."

"You yourself took the initiative in all this," she argued not caring to fathom the meaning of his words. "There were many roads open to you, but you chose the most stormy one."

"If I wished to uphold my prestige this was the only course. As long as law and justice are not violated there cannot be anything very reprehensible in my actions."

She thought for a while before replying.

"I do not wish to become a pleader," she began, retreating a step in beautiful dignity, "because Mr. Chester can undoubtedly protect himself very well in this struggle. Cannot your prestige be maintained, however, without pointing your efforts so severely towards one man? Subjectively such a course might not be as gratifying, but it would at least lend a far more admirable countenance to the combat."

"When that one person is the whole cause of your misfortune," he answered with only half concealed fire, "is it not equitable that he should ——"

"Suffer," she finished for him.

Max Gilbert could not understand why she was arguing so closely.

"It's a conflict for men, Miss Chester," he continued even pleadingly as he noticed her melancholy,

"and I should be very sorry if any woman would even waste a moment of worry over it."

He noticed how her eyes suddenly became fixed upon the six applications protruding from his pocket, "Mr. Gilbert," she asked with throbbing interest, "where do you come from this morning?"

He was taken back by the direct question. "From Jabez Nicholson," was the slow response as he watched her furtively.

Flavia retreated a step. "Of late, Mr. Gilbert, I have taken a deeper interest in my father's affairs and therefore I venture a conjecture as to the reason of your visit this morning. Father told me last night that this man had some six policies expiring and that his agent would surely secure all of them within a day or two. Tell me, Mr. Gilbert," she pleaded now more sadly, "did you get these policies this morning?"

"Yes," replied Max curtly, and not at all pleased that she was taking the matter so seriously.

"And what will be the result of the latest victory?" This time she did not look up.

He answered with some pride. "The last bulwark to my progress is overcome, and henceforth probably I'll be the insurance master of Hull."

"One more question," she diverted; "Can both of these companies exist in the same city?"

"Scarcely," he replied. "English companies have made such broad inroads into the city that the remaining business will hardly sustain the two companies."

"Then one of you must fail most ignobly," she remarked with thoughtful gaze.

"Most probably. What happened here this morn-

ing is but an example of thousands of similar struggles going on over the whole province of Ontario. Month by month the battle will continue until one of us must fall in utter defeat. Will you come and take a seat?" he changed purposely. "There is one a little further up the walk."

"No."

She stood back now in solemn dignity, her noble countenance set with a strong resolution.

"Let us speak but a few words upon other topics," ventured Max kindly but vainly.

"No," replied Flavia, staying his advance with her outstretched hand, "we cannot to-day, nor on any future day. I am too sorry over the present turn of events: I am sorry that you have initiated this bitter struggle."

"There are always two in such a battle," he returned also gathering strength, "and we should not so quickly judge that one of them is wrong. I do not plead for your friendship, for you are the master of your own interests and affections, but I would like to ask for a fair judgment if there is any such thing left in this world."

Their eyes met strongly for a moment and perhaps hers softened; at least she seemed to understand.

"I make no judgment, Mr. Gilbert," came from her nobly. "I only think of this fact, that Adrian Chester is my father, and my duty lies with mine. I cannot wish you success for your success means my father's ruin." —A pause.— "It is the fork in the waters, and duty says that I must be found with my own."

There was another pause while the shades of sadness deepened on her patrician countenance.

Only with these words did Max Gilbert come to realize that this fair creation was maneuvering for an opportunity to bid him farewell forever. "Miss Chester," he started, "do you mean that our acquaintance must come to this premature end because of a difference in business world without you?"

"Yes, such is my meaning," replied Flavia wistfully. "Friends we can still be, but friends at a distance."

She was moving away for her departure. "You do not understand human affections, Mr. Gilbert, else you would readily understand how we feel the pains of our dear friends as if they were our own."

His answer was unintelligible to her. "And therefore must I lose all because I feel too strongly the wrongs inflicted on *my* own."

Though forced to the present step by a sense of duty, Flavia felt that Max Gilbert had as much justice on his side as her father; therefore also did she dislike to continue the argument. While her eyes remained fixed on the ground, a hand went out languidly to him in farewell. It was a cruel world, he thought, and therefore he pressed the hand and held it much longer indeed than necessary. Then her two heavy eye lashes were upturned as if to beg an end of the interview.

"Is it, 'Au Revoir'?" he whispered fervently.

"No, 'Adieu'. It is the Fork in the Waters."

* * * *

"The day after tomorrow" mentioned by Fink had

come and now towards its end, he could be seen walking slowly along the street which led to his master's home.

"Back again?" greeted Chester, turning about to face Fink.

That burly figure was in none too gentle a frame of mind. "Yes, and with the biggest disappointment I ever had."

"How's that?" asked the other, not yet grasping the facts. "Surely your informant told you the truth?"

"He did," growled the agent pacing up and down, "but Gilbert arrived there before me, and captured every single policy."

"Fates and furies!" cried the astounded Chester, throwing his paper aside.

"Somehow he secured the same news and took an early car yesterday morning for Hull. When I arrived all policies covering an insurance of thirty thousand dollars, were already in his hands."

Chester ground his teeth in rage. "He's the very devil. I wonder if during this last year and a half, he has ever taken time to sleep and eat. Thirty thousand dollars!"

Fink now came towards the Northern manager and bending over him said in stern tones,

"Chester, you've got to do something."

"What is it?" he asked, startled at the fierce seriousness of the agent.

"It's this," answered Fink bringing his fist on the desk. "You'll have to do something crooked, decidedly crooked, to save the company. If you don't

do something crooked immediately, you're lost, and Gilbert has won the battle."

A female figure was just passing the office door, and it being slightly ajar, Flavia Chester heard that ominous word "crooked". It fixed her to the spot, and 'mid fear and trembling, she heard the after conversation.

"Crooked!" gasped her father. "I don't like the word, but what do you mean?"

"In four months your annual report will come into print," continued Fink in the same decided tone. "Do you know what story that report will tell?"

"Guess I do," her father answered gloomily.

"I'll tell you," said Fink. "It'll show to the world that Max Gilbert has cut your business in half; that he has in seventeen months almost brought you to your knees."

A grunt of discontented assent came from her father.

"That's just what the last members are waiting for, before they forsake us. They want their insane hopes about this man verified before deserting us in a body."

Fink proceeded, raising his arm in gesture. "I tell you the people are crazy over this man. They think he's a wonder because he had the courage to buy a marble front office worth seventy-five thousand dollars, and capitalize a company at the immense sum of one million dollars. Now they're waiting for our disastrous annual report to bring their wavering resolution to a decision. When that appears they will all desert us to the last man."

It's not as bad as that," remonstrated her father helplessly. "He'll never beat me."

"You're deceiving yourself," keenly put in Fink, retreating a step. "The report will beat you."

"What can I do to prevent it?" asked Chester livening up to a possibility.

"You've—got—to—give—out—a spurious report," came slowly from the agent. "Doctor it up."

Chester gazed startled upon him for a full minute. "How'll that help?" he asked with evident distaste and helplessness.

"It'll help this way," answered Fink slapping one fist into his hand. "If we can show these people at the end of the year that we have not decreased in the slightest, their expectations about Gilbert's success will be disappointed and their confidence in him destroyed. You know that public opinion disappears as quickly as it forms. If we can escape public opinion for one year longer, we're saved. Do you understand my argument?"

"Yes, yes," came in low tones from her father.

"Will you do it?" pressed the agent.

There was long a complete silence in the room as Adrian Chester revolved this great plan in his mind, Fink watching the effect of his arguments almost fiercely.

At the door continued to stand a figure with its beautiful features drawn in pain, wishing and praying that her protector would not consent. Once she was almost persuaded to enter the room and beg him not to besmirch his name with such unscrupulous methods. But the knowledge that he would surely

resent her intrusion most strongly, deterred her from her purpose. Instead, she waited.

After what seemed an interminable space of time to Flavia Chester, she heard her father's heavy answer.

"Darn that Gilbert!" he said. "I'll beat him yet." He had risen now under his excitement, "And I know a way to doctor up a report so that the auditors themselves can't discover the trick. I'll do it: I'll do it."

"Has it come to this?" said Flavia Chester, her hands clasped in agony. "Has this struggle become so relentless that Adrian Chester must resort to illegal measures? How will he do it? What if he were discovered? Oh, how I wish this struggle were at an end."

Then silently and with bowed head she ascended the stairs to her room.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN.

NEW SPRINGS.

The interview with Flavia made Max resolve to satisfy himself on several questions that very evening; if Doree had been her academy friend, then she could give him all information about Flavia Chester; again, he had not yet settled the doubt as to how his own sister had been able to finance her educational course; it was the question as to lack of funds which Dick Kildare had raised in his mind several years before.

Doree consequently was pleasantly surprised to find her brother ready for an hour's entertainment in the parlor. After some singing and playing, she took her place on a footstool at his side to talk to him about their happy life, and about his business prospects.

"What makes you so thoughtful?" she asked, wonderingly.

Max leaned forward benignantlly and placed his hand on her head. When he had a question on his mind he could never waste time in diplomatic skirmishing.

"Doree," he began gravely, "I've wished for a long time to ask you a certain question. Will you promise to answer it truthfully and without equivocation?"

"To be sure, I will," she declared in her unsuspecting manner, though not without perplexity at his serious vein.

The subject had certainly rendered him ill at ease,

for again sinking deeply into his cushioned chair, he gazed at the opposite wall fully a minute before commencing.

"You perhaps know," he said, avoiding her innocent eyes, "that my first year's work on the river was not highly remunerative."

"I've discovered it since," she admitted sadly. "At that time though I understood the expenses of my academy course were being defrayed with money inherited from father; had I known that practically every cent came from your daily wages, I'd not have remained in the academy another day, but would have sought work outside, as was my duty." The moist eyes evidenced the truth of her words.

"As that is all past, we'll pay no more attention to it." He sat up rigidly now while his eyes sought hers with that quondam steeliness of a born commander. "My question is, whether the money thus sent you, was sufficient for your needs; still more plainly, did it enable you to make as respectable an appearance as your girl friends, or was your poverty cause perhaps for their unfriendliness, scorn and derision?" The last words were cut sharply, perhaps to show the heat with which his own imagination had pictured these very possibilities.

No sooner had the now harassed sister realized the trend of his question, than she deeply regretted her foresworn inability to equivocate. A falsehood in such a dilemma was decidedly abhorrent to her pure soul, yet she could not utter the words that must cause her brother so much pain.

Max closely studied her face as it rested in sad

meditation upon her palms. The struggle visibly depicted on her sweet features left him to surmise the unwelcome truth.

"If I'm wrong in my supposition," he pressed with unconscious cruelty, "that your appearance during that first year was such as to elicit the derision of other academicians, say the simple words, 'You're wrong'."

Not even those words would arise from her tortured heart—they would not have been the truth.

"Then I am right," he declared in dejection while inwardly he blamed himself most severely for not having made even greater sacrifices for this lovable sister. It smote his heart to think that the one most dear to him had at any time to assume a less honored position in the academy.

Doree saw the deep grief portrayed on her brother's features and like an innocent child she cast her own tear bedimmed eyes upon him.

"Why, Max, everything you did was noble," she breathed passionately. "What right had I to follow the pleasant life of an academy while you were toiling so hard in the lumber camps. I'm sure you did far more than any other brother in the wide world would have done, and I can never be grateful enough to you. At any rate, here's a sister that loves her kindest of all brothers," she finished, placing her cheeks against his knees.

Max was, however, desirous of more detailed information.

"We'll say, I couldn't help it," he suggested, rais-

ing his head. "Then tell me exactly how the girls acted."

Not suspecting his diplomacy, Doree's youthful heart immediately bubbled forth.

"They were very mean," she began, wholly unconscious that every detail would cut her brother to the quick. "When boxes of sweetmeats, et cetera, arrived for them, they wouldn't think of offering me anything but would display them before my eyes in order to tantalize me. A few, but they were the more unprincipled, whispered about that I was a poor man's brat, and that the authorities were educating me through charity. Because I could not appear in so many and such modish dresses, they banished me from their circle." Gradually realizing part of her brother's intention, she hastily added: "But that was only the case during the first year; a new superior then reformed the discipline and you also began sending me more than enough money."

"Strange," remarked Max thoughtfully, "but I thought my remittances were sufficient for your tuition and also for an ordinary amount of pocket money."

"You see at that time the tuition was raised," she explained, "and thinking that you could use father's money to better advantage, I made up the extra sum from my spending money."

With that declaration, Max's soul experienced a renewed thrill of love for the sister who could be so tender-hearted and considerate.

"Wasn't there a single girl in the academy who befriended you?" he inquired, more calmly.

Indeed there was one," she joyfully broke forth. "She was not only the wealthiest but the prettiest girl in the academy."

"What was her name?" queried Max with strange interest.

"I can't remember her whole correct name, for we had given her the simpler one of "Chuck" Aylesworth. "Chuck" was a very angel of goodness, for immediately upon noticing the attitude of the other girls, she chose me as the special object of her affection. No box of sweets ever came from her home, but I had to consume a very good half, while sometimes she even gave me little fineries, saying that they were superfluous to her extensive wardrobe; of course, that was merely a pretext to cover her kindness. Her personal attractions and high position were such as demanded the greatest respect from all; it was therefore most galling to the others, that she should publicly display me as her most intimate friend. Never once did the slightest depreciative remark about my condition come from her lips." Doree was chatting along most effusively. "Once she found me crying, and it was so pleasant to have her consoling me that I almost wished those dark hours would come oftener."

"Chuck, Chuck," repeated Max to himself. Then looking at Doree, he asked, "Do you know where this girl is now residing?"

"No Max, I don't know. She remained at the Convent only during my first year. Report said she was completing her course in another school."

Certain words of a silent vow had recurred to Max

Gilbert's memory. "Who befriends this sister, shall also be my friend, and shall never ask aught of me in vain!" A new zest was given to his life, as he dwelt on the probability of some day discovering this benefactor. Never before had he heard of so disinterested a friendship as this noble girl had lavished upon his own darling sister; in beautiful panorama he pictured those actions of lavish kindness within the academy walls. As deeply as the rehearsal of private grief had hurt him, so anxiously did his heart now cry out, desiring to know more of this high-minded young woman. As a brother of Doree, he must put forth every effort to find her.

Again he repeated the vow, "Who befriends her shall be my friend and shall never ask aught of me in vain."

In the meantime, Doree was contracting her eyebrows in the endeavor to recall the name of her kind friend. "I recall something," she said half to herself. "Aylesworth is not her present name."

"How can that be?" interrupted Max, interestedly.

"Just wait, just wait," begged Doree, "it's all coming back now. — Yes, I remember; there had been some financial troubles, so her mother had whimsically registered the girl under her own family name. Yes, I remember, the mother was a very dignified English lady. However, the name "Chuck" superseded all others and became so popular that most of us indeed never tried to remember either family name. Again Doree studied the design in the carpet for inspiration. "Chuck! Chuck!" but what was her first name?" she asked herself.

"Why not go over a few names?" suggested Max, who was even more anxious to discover the name.

Then to give her time for reflection, he thought he would satisfy himself on his second question.

"Doree, did you know a young lady in that academy named Flavia Chester?"

He was in no manner prepared for his sister's next move. She leaped to her feet, while her young eyes glowed with joy and intelligence. "That's the name, Max; that's the girl," she almost screamed. "Flavia Chester is that great friend I was telling you about. Do you know her, Max? Where is she? How did you come to know her?"

His hand grasped her arm in restraint. "Doree, can it be? he whispered hoarsely. And what a world of thought arose in his mind at this discovery. That Flavia Chester, of all women, should enter his very home in this irresistible manner! That the being whom business strife had taken so far away from him, should at one time have placed him under such great obligations! Suddenly she had become a living, throbbing reality that would forever take up his gratitude and intensest interest. The dream of the drawing room was now his best friend, a friend so very far away; and she lived in a home closed to him probably forever; any meeting in the future would even have to happen by mere chance. Again his thoughts flowed into more pleasant channels. She had first interested him with her beauty of body and mind, but now what a beautiful soul was revealed to him. Now indeed he seemed to have always known

her; far up on the river he had seen her as a girl; at the ball he beheld her as an accomplished young woman; now he knew her very soul —

"Why don't you speak?" asked Doree distractedly, as she noticed the tense and surprised look upon his face.

"Come, sit on the arm of my chair, Doree," he spoke feelingly. Then putting his arm about her slender waist, he briefly told her of his acquaintance with Flavia Chester, of the meeting in the woods, of the incident at the ball.

Doree seemed to live in fairyland during the narration of this strange tale and like a fairy she interrupted the speaker with a hundred sweet questions.

"And why didn't I know that she was living in Ottawa?" asked Doree.

"Because she has spent very little of her time in the city; nearly a whole year was taken up by a journey abroad, while frequent visits since to friends in Albany can further answer your question."

"I'll see her to-morrow," babbled Doree, enthusiastically. Then the knowledge of the enmity between Adrian Chester and her brother dawned upon her. "Do you think I should go, Max?" she reflected with grave concern.

"Yes, go, Doree," he responded. "I know your fears, but this battle is between men and should in no instance mar your friendship with Flavia Chester. Yes, go, Doree," he repeated meekly, as his thoughts again reverted to the strange vow which now bound him to this beautiful young woman.

Max glanced at his watch, then rose to his feet. With this he raised the golden-haired lass in his strong arms and kissed her. "You're a good, dear sister," he murmured tenderly."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN.

REVENGE THWARTED, LENDS BUT GREATER FIRE TO THE FLAME.

The capital city of the Dominion was in the grip of a January storm. The winds shrieked and howled as they gained momentum with each step. Laden with bristles, and snow that it had powdered to the finest particles, this northern blast shivering itself from its long sweep down the icy river, fell upon the stately city, and with its hoary fleece, soon covered every spire, every mansion, every hamlet. Already in the early hours, had the capital surrendered to this irresistible onslaught, till at last the winds as if satisfied with their conquest subsided slightly, and swept now through the streets with a low sobbing and wailing sound.

In the third room from the street in that marble building which evoked the admiration of every sight-seer, sat the manager of the "Western World". The general idea of this private office was in full keeping with the classical elegance that predominated throughout the whole structure: it was airy but not to the detriment of coziness; two large glazed windows, curtained with some light, fluffy material softened the winter light that fell generously about the busy manager.

He addressed another letter, blotted it, put a stamp on the corner, then placing it with a large collection

of similar correspondence, he slowly leaned back in the comfortable office chair. The wall directly before him was covered with a large glass bookcase, which reached from the floor to the ceiling. But Max Gilbert, with his hands clasped behind his head, was so absorbed with present thought, that it is doubtful whether his eyes saw the volumes.

"This morning tells the tale," he spoke with evident exultation.

The four months before the annual meeting of the two companies had passed, and on this day, the telling reports for the past year would come from the press.

That this imperturbable man was laboring under some excitement was shown by the frequent references to his watch.

"Eight o'clock," he muttered. "Dick promised to have the first reports here half an hour ago."

Upon the reports of the two companies depended not only their mutual future progress, but the first realization of that revengeful scheme which Max Gilbert had inaugurated against his enemy. Success had certainly attended his efforts during the last twenty-four months; nevertheless, there were still some thousands in the Chester ranks who were waiting for a last assurance before transferring their business to the "Western World". Then would the old Northern be a memberless concern, and the time have come for the fulfilment of those fateful words, "when we meet again you shall fall."

Like a glowing blast furnace which throbs day and night in its work of destruction, so had an almost

preternatural energy burned within this man, as he toiled on to the covert end.

Just then Dick entered the office, a face flushed with the cold, looking out from his winter garments. Under his arm he carried the package which Max so anxiously awaited.

"Here is the first batch of our reports," began Dick, depositing the parcel on the desk.

"Ah, this will start the final act," declared the manager with a feeling of pride.

Dick untied the package and selected one of the slips for a hasty perusal.

"But where is Chester's report?" asked the manager who had been vainly examining the package.

"Did you expect some of them to be sent with ours?" asked Dick. "I know that the same firm printed both."

"Yes," nodded Max, "The printer told me he'd enclose a few samples with ours."

"In that case," answered Dick, "I better return for them; he probably overlooked the matter."

"All right, Dick, I wish you would."

"I'm rather anxious myself to read Chester's story," remarked the agent, once more buttoning his coat for the cold walk.

The manager's answer was solemn. "Our work is coming to its end: after the appearance of the disastrous report, Chester's last policy holder will come over to us. Yes, yes, a few more months will complete our mission."

"It's his life's work," murmured Dick to himself as he once more breasted the storm. "If revenge is

ever lawful, then Max Gilbert possesses that right."

Almost at the same time that Dick was returning to the printing office, a dark haired young woman in the grey stone mansion received the first report of the "Northern" company. Ever since she had overheard Adrian Chester's remark, that he would illegally prevent the appearance of a damaging report, she had taken a most anxious interest in Ottawa's insurance affairs; this day would inform her whether he had put the lawless project into execution. If her own prayer were answered, that report must honestly mark a tremendous decrease in all departments of the companies business; if not, —.

Perplexed feelings of hope and suspicion agitated her soul, as retiring to the privacy of her room she slowly unfolded the printed slip. At first sight, a spasm of pain flashed across the patrician countenance. With each fresh intelligence the color fled more from her face, as reading on she gradually learned the whole extent of the rascally procedure. "How I wish he had not stooped to this act!" she exclaimed, crumpling up the paper in her hand. "If he only could have been prevented from this action!"

Her long, dark eye-lashes drooped sadly as she reflected on the disagreeable fact. Then straightening out the paper, she gave it another rapid survey. "It's worse than I expected," she commented between the lines. "He did it almost too well."

She crossed slowly over to the window. "If he had only left Max Gilbert in that position, how different might everything be!" she remarked, gazing

•

wistfully out upon the storm. ——— She did not know the past.

* * * *

Dick burst into the room, forgetting in his excitement to brush off the snow that lay thickly on his cap and shoulders.

"Max," he exclaimed dubiously, throwing Chester's report on the desk, "'There's something rotten in Denmark'; examine those reports."

While the manager went over the leaflet of his opponent, Dick re-read another to convince himself that his discovery had been no delusion. During the perusal he took time to watch his employer's face, but the stoical countenance betrayed not the least sign of the feelings which were most certainly disturbing his inmost soul.

The excitable Dick could no longer contain himself. "What does it mean?" he exclaimed with heightened voice. "This report is almost as good as the one they gave out last year. Where is the big decrease which we've been expecting in members, assets, amount of insurance, etc., etc.?"

The manager had not yet looked up from his paper. Taking a rapid stride towards the window, the younger man continued: "They're almost as safe as they were a year ago. Everything shows prosperity, plenty of money, members and insurance; in every department they excel our own figures. If that is truth, we have not nearly beaten them."

Max now took his gaze from the report. Except for the more expressive firmness in his features, he

seemed as calm as if everything had turned out according to his wishes.

Dick continued in a despairing manner. "I'm sure they've lost tremendously around here. Can Chester have appointed new agencies elsewhere and made up for his losses?"

The stoic tattooed the desk with his pencil. "I don't think so, Dick. Hull is the only city beyond the province where they used to do business."

The agent seemed to recognize a peculiar undertone of hope in the manager's words: his voice was heavier than usual as if concealing an announcement which must be held in abeyance until further developments; there was even an unusual glitter in those eyes as the seemingly disappointing intelligence was borne upon him.

"Ring up the telegraph office," he said suddenly, "and tell them to send a messenger boy to our office."

In response a peak-capped youth arrived in about five minutes.

In the meantime Max had been busily engaged writing numerous telegrams.

"Send these immediately," he commanded, handing the messenger sixteen such slips of paper. "They're of the greatest importance."

"Those telegrams," he explained, turning calmly to his friend, "are going to the leading brokers and bankers of Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. I'll find out from these men whether or not Chester has established any new agencies throughout the Dominion."

"I begin to see your plan," hazarded Dick.

A sudden energy seized the before listless and dreamy manager, for hastily walking to the glass case, he selected and opened three large volumes.

"Here, Dick," he declared, "There's a great work ahead of us. While we're waiting for the answers to the telegrams, you examine this book and add up all the business which we took away from Adrian Chester during the last twenty-one months: I'll do the same with the other volume. I believe the secret is discovered."

Not a moment was lost by the two in getting to work. Dick kept at it for about an hour and a half, then looking at his watch, he explained, "It's time for my appointment with the furniture dealer. You must excuse me for the present. I'll return by one o'clock this afternoon."

"Very well," observed the manager, scarcely looking up from his large volume. "By then I'll probably be able to illumine you on this entanglement."

When it was near lunch time, Max took the receiver from his desk phone, and called up his sister.

"Hello! Is that you Doree?" —

"Well, I'll not be home for luncheon today, so you needn't wait for me." —

"No, just very busy. I'll see you at dinner though." — "All right, Good-bye."

Again he turned to his absorbing work and did not look up till he was aroused by the entrance of the messenger with the first answer to the telegrams.

"Ah!" he broke forth complacently. "Just as I thought. If they're all as favorable as this one, I'll bring the climax on Chester within four weeks."

Throughout the whole morning he kept at his task and allowed himself to be interrupted only by the intermittent reception of telegrams, bringing more news from the seven provinces. Twelve o'clock came, but he did not even think of his luncheon.

About one o'clock nine yellow slips of paper lay open beside him. This was a sufficient number to place him in certainty about his quest. Neither did any more work with the volumes seem necessary for he leaned back in his chair to reflect on the discovery just made.

"The trap is sprung," he declared hoarsely. "Almost two years have I worked for an opportunity, and now at last revenge will see its consummation." Many a time did he repeat that thought to let the welcome news sink deep into his exulting soul. "Within one month I will publicly expose him, ruin his future, and induce the government to take away his charter." Every thought moved slowly, heavily, distinctly.

Another telegram was here brought into his office. "Same as the rest. Ah, Chester," he apostrophized, "this time you overdid yourself. I told you I would hunt you like the Indian does his deadliest enemy." Once more came the grim thought, "Within one month, I'll ruin you publicly, socially, —."

The word, "socially," conjured up before him a face beautiful, intellectual, patrician. Two deeply lustrous eyes with dark brows of exquisite turn were gazing silently, appealingly, upon the pupil of the fierce Dakotahs.

"No," he remonstrated with troubled determina-

tion to the pleading countenance. "I do not wish your disgrace; you are innocent of any wrong doing, of even the slightest part in your father's machinations against me."

That this was a most difficult struggle was evinced by the fitful turn of his half-closed eyes. Fain would he have seized this fair being and held her far above the contamination of the dual battle. Revenge was the religion he had learned in the tepees on Lake Winnepegosis, and revenge he had sworn for all the indignities heaped upon him. Sentiment had not prevented Chester from inflicting the injury, and it must not deter him in its repayment. He longed most sincerely, yes, he ached for her security, but if the fates decreed her an innocent companion of a rascally man, let the fates take their course. Every species of argument was framed to bolster him up against this moment of weakness, until at last it so wearied him that he leaped from his chair with the exclamation, "I'll banish her from my thoughts. Law and justice are with me. Revenge must be had."

When Dick entered a few minutes later, his leader's face once more bore the calmness of the stoical Indian.

"The telegrams have arrived, I see," he said. "What's the result?"

"Just as I expected," answered Max, advancing to the center of the room. "Those telegrams are from every province in the Dominion and they inform me that Chester has not established a single agency outside of those which we know of in this province."

"Whew!" whistled Dick. "Have you solved the problem of his glowing report?"

"It's a falsehood from the first figure to the last," he explained indignantly. "He is trying to stave off unfavorable public opinion by illegal means; but by this act he has incriminated himself sufficiently to cause the loss of his company's character."

"Exit Chester with the Northern Cash and Mutual," declaimed the agent. "Enter, the 'Western World' with flourish of trumpet and loud acclamations of the excited populace."

"Not so fast, though," interposed Gilbert, putting forth a calming hand. Then meaningly, "Were you ever a detective, Dick?"

The abrupt question brought the young man to saner reflections. "I know the theory pretty well," he conceded dazedly, "but can't say that I've ever practiced the art."

"Enough," pursued the manager. "Then the rest of the short struggle depends upon you."

"How?" he queried, still in a daze.

Gilbert's reply was slow and distinct. "To proceed legally against Chester, we must have certain and detailed proof of his illegal act. Now, I want you to use a present vacation to secure all the information necessary for our case. Find out positively how Chester has illegally swelled the membership of his company, its assets, capital, etc., etc. If you succeed in the undertaking, you have assisted me in my greatest life's work, and incidentally sounded the death knell of the 'Northern Cash and Mutual'."

"But how?" questioned the astonished Dick.

"Use your own ingenuity," he answered quietly. "It's possible: the whole matter rests with you." Then looking at the old mission clock on the wall behind him, he said, "It's three o'clock and about time I had some luncheon. You'll accept the duty of detective, won't you?"

"Sure," came spontaneously from one who still remembered the day when he owed his life to this man.

In the evening Dick made a short call at the Gilbert home.

"What's the matter with you to-day?" queried Doree, as for the tenth time she noticed Dick's restlessness. "Even Max appears nervous for the first time in his life. It would appear as if you were both on the verge of discovering a new land."

"Can't tell," he stated. "It's a professional secret."

"Tell, won't you, Dick?" she entreated. "I'll promise faithfully never to breathe a word."

"Couldn't think of it," he flashed back mysteriously.

But after a little more of such pleading, he yielded to her importunities and told of the morning's discovery.

"And you're to be a detective!" she laughed, throwing back her head.

"Yes, I am," he answered, somewhat hurt by her taunt, "and take my word for it that I'll get this information for Max if I get no sleep until the first of February. It's my first opportunity to repay him for having saved my life on the river."

But day after day passed by, and still he came no nearer to the solution. Several nights he tossed for hours upon his bed, his wild imagination formulating schemes that were appallingly bold and harrowingly novel. Should he drug his enemy, Fink; bluff out the manager, or hold up Wynn at revolver's point?

Only three weeks vacation remained for him to complete the seemingly impossible task, and he had not even conceived the slightest notion how to begin.

Several times already he had shadowed Chester as he returned from his day's work. Beyond, however, discovering that the "Northern" manager always carried home a package wrapped in green baize, these efforts gained him nothing. Then one evening a thought came to him so thrilling as to startle even his prolific imagination. "I've got it," he exclaimed, "I've got it: the information I seek, is in the very books which Chester brings home from the office every evening—I'll find my evidence in Chester's own house."

Scarcely any plan indeed would have been extraordinarily novel to one of his peculiar temperament. The remainder of the night was spent in enlarging the idea which had so suddenly captivated him.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN.

SPARKLING TRIBUTARIES.

Only long after the time allotted for the work had the amateur detective solved the mystery. It was the day after the completion of the task: the thought of his grand success, not to mention the vision of the balmy spring day without, made Dick Kildare this second Sherlock Holmes, chafe very much with his work at the unromantic typewriter before him. Then at about half past four, not able to endure the strain any longer, he thought as indeed he often thought, that he could spend his time to no better advantage than by calling on Doree Gilbert.

Clothed in a white muslin dress and almost hidden by a huge sun bonnet, she was busily engaged in planting some bulbs.

He walked stealthily to a position behind her, and thus unseen watched her efforts in the horticultural department for some time. "Flowers always elevated my thoughts," he began from the rear, "and these few minutes survey of your botanical attempts have made me feel like the driver of an aeroplane."

"Forsake that muse at once; she's very giddy and preparing for a tumble," answered Doree recognizing the voice but not looking up. Then rising, "Hello, Dick," she exclaimed archly. "Goodness, but you're fitted out today. I really believe you have more conceit than anyone else in the city. Just look at those creases."

"Wait, wait," he protested with mock gravity. "I demand a chance to defend myself against such abuse."

"And where did you get the cigar?" she continued unheedingly.

"You wish to know whence came this instrument of destruction?" he asked still preserving his theatrical manner. "List, and I will communicate the terrible intelligence to you. Last night while flying at a terrible rate of speed in my aeroplane over the Indian ocean, I was suddenly surprised to behold one of those eastern monsoons sweeping towards us at a rate equally accelerated. Coming nearer and nearer I noticed a large black spot in its very center, but could not discern what its nature was. In a moment, however, my staunch air-ship was doing valiant battle in the very midst of the monsoon. Still nearer came that black spot, and coming abreast of it, what was my surprise to discover that it was nothing more nor less than the British Parliament buildings, blown from far-away England. Just then, one of the windows flew open and the prime minister reaching out his hand, said, 'Here, Dick, have a cigar?' This is the weed," he finished, looking reflectively at the cigar between his fingers.

"Oh Dick," exclaimed Doree, "that's the biggest you ever told. 'Where did you get it?'"

"From the prime minister," he answered, purposely misinterpreting her. "But that's not to the point," changed Dick. "Both Max and your house-keeper are away this afternoon, so I want you to have dinner with me in the restaurant."

"Why," she asked blithely.

"Because to cook for yourself is strictly against the orders of the Board of Health."

"All right for you, Mr. Kildare," she answered sharply. "Now, I'll not go with you at all."

Dick thought she meant it. "Ah, but you must," he said soothingly. "I didn't mean that, you know; besides you should, because this is my birthday."

A burst of laughter answered his pleading. "Dick Kildare," she exclaimed in mock resentment, "this is about your tenth birthday within a month."

"You'll come though, won't you?" he still pleaded. "After dinner we'll take a walk to Rockliffe Park; it's grand at this time of the year."

"Well, I'll overlook your afternoon's transgression, just because you worked hard of late. Max said last night that you've done splendidly."

"He did, did he?" asked Dick, with sudden interest. "Did Max really say that about me?" A word of praise from his employer was for Dick always motive power for another month's good work.

"Yes, he did," she answered, giving the words a certain inflection to show that she was of the same sentiment; "but you must wait till I change my dress."

"Why?" asked Dick, in masculine ignorance.

"Oh, you stupid; can't you see this white dress is only for around home?"

"Too much for me," he answered despairingly. "I don't see how you can possibly look more beautiful in another. White just makes you look like an angel."

"Dick, you're wandering terribly. Just wait

twenty minutes. If you wish, I'll put on something very similar to this," she responded, looking up slyly for his approval.

"All right," he answered, then shouted after her as she was running to the house." Don't make that a woman's twenty minutes: I did not intend that we have breakfast together."

Dick's misgivings were in vain for she reappeared not very long after. A light colored dress with a V-shaped yoke constituted her simple yet beautiful attire. Except for the minute satin flowering in the pattern, and a few little sprays on her bosom she was totally devoid of artificial adornment. Ornament was not necessary, for innocence and purity had long ago imprinted their indescribable charm upon her tender complexion; the throb of the morning ever scintillated in her actions.

To Dick's mind, only the best restaurant in the city was half good enough for his charming companion.

Dick entered the restaurant and majestically handed his straw hat to the waiter.

"Beautiful hat!" commented Doree roguishly. "Where did you get it?"

"A friend went halves with me," he responded facetiously, "so I wear the hat in summer while he is allowed to wear it during the winter."

They seated themselves.

"What kind of language are those people mutilating?" he asked dryly after they were seated, nodding to a group of foreigners two tables distant.

"It seems to be the Slav tongue," answered Doree.

"Luscious, whatever it is," he commented. "It sounds just like a person washing his teeth."

"You'd better hurry with your order," advised Doree. "They're waiting for you."

Dick beckoned to one of the attendants. "Are you a waiter?" he asked, then whispered something in his ear.

"Dick," remonstrated his companion. "What did you tell that waiter? He seemed very distressed about your remark."

"I just asked him if he thought the meals would be the same price a hundred years from now."

"Whatever you said," she retorted, "you'll have to give the man our order before I talk another word with you."

Dick obeyed her mandate, and at the same time to assuage the injured feelings of the waiter, he pressed a generous tip into his hand. He gazed at the ceiling for a moment. "By the way," he began, "did Max ever tell you how he saved my life on the river?"

"No," she answered in surprise, "he never told me a word about it. Did he actually save your life?"

"He did," responded Dick emphatically, "and at the risk of his own. I should have known however, that he wouldn't prate to you about his own achievements."

Then he narrated in glowing terms the heroic deed at the ice jam. His hand moved freely to accompany his words, while a strong imagination employed expressions and figures that portrayed the memorable scene most vividly and realistically, to his interested auditor.

"Isn't he a wonderful brother?" she said admiringly, at the close of the thrilling story.

The waiter, arriving with their tray, interrupted them.

"Is everything satisfactory?" asked Dick.

"I think so," she replied.

Dick, placing a piece of potato in his mouth, discovered that on his part he could not swear to absolute complacency.

"Cold as ice!" he muttered.

Once more beckoning to the waiter, he returned the dish of potatoes to him.

"Tell the cook that we didn't order these potatoes a la North Pole," he remarked smoothly.

"Have you suddenly bought this restaurant?" smiled his companion. "You seem to be lording it over these waiters. I advise a little caution before you get into trouble."

Then returning to the former topic, "You seem to be very fond of your brother?" remarked Dick.

"Fond!" she exclaimed, while her blue eyes reflected the depths of her feeling. "I'd do anything for him. But," she continued in beautiful sadness, "I can't do anything. He does it all. He'll not even allow me to get up in the morning and make his breakfast."

"Why don't you wake up?" asked Dick stupidly.

"I'm such a heavy sleeper that I simply cannot. Often I've placed an alarm clock beside me; but he looks into my room every night before retiring and removes it."

Then her thoughts reverting to the business of this

brother, she continued, "Max has been acting very strangely since the foundation of the new company. Except for the few hours he gives to me, he is thinking and dreaming of the great struggle with Chester. He has lost thought of everything which tends to peace and comfort. From five o'clock in the morning to his hour of retiring, this one idea of revenge is burning within him. Several times already, his mind was so preoccupied that he forgot his meals. Oftentimes too, of an evening, he takes his solitary seat before the office fireplace, while strange Indian words drop from his lips. Some of those thoughts are directed to Fire Sticks, but the mention of Chester's name shows that they more frequently concern his enemy. It's too much of a passion," she finished, turning her troubled eyes to Dick. "I wish he'd give it up."

"Give it up!" ejaculated Dick. "The furies themselves couldn't persuade him to forsake the scheme. But don't mind these peculiarities. All great men possess a few of them; I have very many," he finished dryly.

Thus their conversation ran in deep and shallow channels until the end of the dinner.

"We'll have plenty of time to see Rockcliffe Park before Max returns," remarked Dick rising. "The sunset will just be in its first glory when we arrive."

The predictions of Dick proved true. After rounding many clusters of the beautiful trees which deck the park, they came out on an eminence which looked over the Ottawa and far away to the West, where the full glories of sunset stood out upon the sky.

Doree stood there in wonderment, gazing about her as if she would embrace all the beautiful nature that owed its existence to the God of Goodness. Several times Dick tried to engage her in conversation, but always finding her more absorbed in the golden scene, he desisted after a few attempts, and both turned their eyes westward. Leaning far over the river's precipice, Doree Gilbert had become an aesthetic philosopher.

It was as if nature were offering a holocaust of adoration to its Maker. The element of the west had united to form a glowing picture that had the earth and sky for its illimitable borders. The sinking sun was just touching a hazy, vapory line of clouds, suffusing and permeating these even to their vanishing with its incandescent brilliancy. The whole horizon was an altar of living embers which directed their brightest glow to the huge and gorgeous tabernacle in their center. The west glowed and burned. Not a speck moved in the air. It was that sublime, that intense worship of silence.

Doree gazed at it long, and lovingly.

"Wonderful!" she exclaimed, while her eyes spoke the admiration of the soul. "It puts me in mind of a certain painting we had in our academy at Montreal, only this is so real, so true."

"You talk as if this scene had made you sad," remarked her companion, glad once more to have converse.

"It's strange," she said, "but such sights always make me feel sad."

Deep emotion thrilled her every word as she

turned her eyes once more across the river. "Those gorgeous colorings in the sky, tell me most plainly, that all things beautiful must come from above. I look at the resplendent sunset, admire it, and love it, yet it is so very far away; I long to possess it, to place it in my arms, to call it my own, but it's grandeur overwhelms me and I am forced to sink back before the absolutely unattainable."

Dick was astounded at her display of deep thought. "You've become a philosopher, Doree," he remarked admiringly.

"No," she answered, with the same interest. "I never reasoned it out; I feel it. This evening the Creator, with one sweep of His brush transforms the whole western heavens, showing us how small our world is, when He chooses to act upon it. Must the thought not make us reflect on our own nothingness, for we are no more than atoms upon that earth."

He lowered his head. "I never considered it in your light," he said pensively. "I also love nature but I am satisfied with its beauty, and never use it for a teacher. You have wonderful ideas, Doree."

"No ideas are wonderful," she answered in subdued tones. "Not even a poet has reason to flatter himself at the production of a beautiful thought. The eternal God is the infinity of such beautiful ideas that had no cause, but always were. "No," she continued, gazing into space, "our ideas are probably the result of weeks of laborious dreaming; they are not infinite, not even indefinite, but only a little finiteness with a new side turned to the light. Even

our highest soaring are weak when compared to infinity."

"Perhaps they are; perhaps they are," murmured her companion quietly.

She turned about with a quick move. "See how that ray shot from the horizon even to the topmost heavens. It was the last. The beautiful colors loved each other well; it was their final farewell before parting, never to meet again."

From an immeasurable height above the heavenly dome, descended the gigantic bird of darkness, gradually covering all the earth, from the east even to the west, with its clawed and sable wings.

Doree, wrapped in thought, was all oblivious of the rapidly disappearing twilight, until a remark of her companion made her conscious of the phenomenon. Dick had been astounded beyond measure at the serious thoughts to which she had just given utterance. Never before had he seen this phase of her character, nor heard her use such speech. After all his associations with this "airy fairy", Doree, he had not nearly fathomed the depth of her beautiful soul.

Walking homeward they had come beneath the glare of a park light, when Dick turned toward her with outstretched arms. All the fire of love which his imaginative temperament could elicit, lay in a pair of eyes that glowed now with intense seriousness. So overwhelmed was he with his thrilling emotion, that for a moment his drawn expression had to speak the words, his lips could not utter.

"Sunbeam!" he said, advancing a step nearer and

thrilling with excitement. "Don't you know, I love —."

Her woman's intuition had informed Doree from the first moment, what words were on the point of being spoken by him. But Dick never completed this sentence, for with a laugh and a flourish, his fairy had disappeared in a thicket. Nor did he find her again until he came into a more prominent highway. Perhaps it was premeditated on her part, but from then until they reached home she chattered so volubly and in a strain so remote from Dick's sentiments, that he almost believed the scene of a few moments since had never been a reality. She was a sunbeam, but a flitting one.

"Dick," she said, with a certain gravity, after they had returned home, "I'm going to ask you a few questions."

"The prisoner is prepared," he answered, waving his hand towards the ceiling, "but the stars of heaven be my witness that I am not guilty of this crime." It had not taken him very long to regain his jovial spirits.

"You know Latin, Greek, science, geometry and several more of the advanced branches of study, don't you?"

"Yes," he answered, not suspecting what end she had in view, "only my teachers argued differently."

"Good," she continued, "but you came here from a lumber camp, and I've never heard you mention any other kind of life which you've followed."

"I see," he said wisely, as he recognized her trend of thought.

"I suppose you do," she replied. "Firstly, where did you receive your education? Secondly, you've never mentioned a word about your parents; are they living or dead?"

"Doree," he answered, as he studied the floor, "I'll not get sentimental over it, but tell it to you in as happy a strain as if it were a comic story.. I long ago consigned the whole affair to the regions of 'Don't Care'."

He began—"My home is situated in a little village of the state of Michigan; and as far as I know a father and two sisters are still living there. Father was reputed a rich man, and when his darling Richard came to the age of fifteen, he sent him very kindly to one of the best universities in the east."

The strain of seriousness becoming too protracted he was forced already to deviate into more lightsome channels. "Richard Kildare, Jr., was a model for the east in many ways, although strangely enough the professors continually frowned upon his shining example. But Dick soon became a haven of refuge for any student who disliked Homer, Tacitus, Virgil, or the rest of the antidiluvian gang; he was a comfort to the brave souls who never obeyed a rule—in short, he was become another Spartacus with the gladiators. Well, to come to our story, the gladiators increased so rapidly and became so courageous, that to curb their spirits they were forbidden to go with the football team to any strange city for one full season. The gladiators chafed; in fact, chafing is what made them such noble gladiators. It so happened that the team was scheduled to play in a near-

by town where they had always received very poor treatment. With the exception of three professors who accompanied the club, it meant expulsion for any other student to be found on these strange grounds. Then arose the noble Spartacus and harranged the gang in language most warlike, with the result that the haughty Romans sneaked to that town and watched the game through cracks in the fence. But gladiators chafe. Well, decision after decision was rendered against our team and they naturally chafed more. Then another particularly adverse judgment was made and no longer able to endure the sight, those noble and brave souls cast all caution to the winds, leaped the fence with a bound, and in a few minutes cleared the field of every spectator and opponent. We saved our team from ill treatment and defeat, but the professors had seen us."

"And what then?" asked Doree interestedly.

"Spartacus with five others of the principal gladiators was expelled from the educational arena. Kildare, Sr., supported the authorities for he had always been a poor sport, and politely informed me that he would be just as well pleased if I sought my own living from thenceforth."

"Where did you go then?" again asked Doree.

"I was happy and hopeful, Doree," he answered, "and didn't much care what the world might do to me. I wandered northward, struck the lumber camps, went from one to the next, spending my wages as recklessly as if I never would come to a day of want. Finally I crossed the Canadian border, and

met your brother; since then I have been fairly successful in the affairs of this world."

"Indeed you have," she corroborated, endeavoring thus to show her gratitude for his candid confession.

"But it was your curiosity that drew out the story," he declared divining her intention. "When will this peculiar feminine faculty ever cease? Woman's curiosity brought the first trouble into this world, and I verily believe that the final act of this human drama, will be another curious woman reaching for the last apple which hangs on the last tree."

He leaped from his seat. "But Doree, where is the needle?" he changed now looking very baffling.

"The needle!"

"Yes, you are in the presence of Sherlock Holmes. Quick, get the smoking jacket and the briar pipe, Watson, for London is to be burned down to-night."

"Dick, I'll take a nap until the temperature goes down." And laying back her golden head she closed her eyes.

"No, Doree, I have a story that will make the hangings on the windows tremble for excitement," he called eagerly.

There was something so mysterious about his voice that in obedience she gave him her whole attention.

"Do you know that I've been a regular old sleuth for the last three nights, invading people's homes, disturbing their slumbers, securing valuable information, etc., etc.," he began very seriously.

"I do not know how to answer you," she replied very dubiously, "but your speech is just like that old

sentence, 'he pulled out his trusty weapon and thirty more redskins bit the dust.' "

"But I'm serious," he pressed knitting his brows. "Do you remember an injunction of Max that I was to ferret out the way in which Chester garbled his annual report?"

She leaned forward now expecting developments. "Yes, I do remember. Did you get the information?"

"Yes, but only by entering Chester's own home."

"You did?" she cried in alarm. "What did you discover? Weren't you frightened?"

But Dick had again to become humorous. "Frightened! My clumsiness made me frightened, and my fright again made me clumsy, so there I was between the two like a giraffe trying to balance himself in a birch bark canoe. Doree, Doree, I'll never do it again. Upon entering that house every scratch to my startled senses at least, sounded like a fusilade of arms, every step like the boom of cannon."

"And you really got into Adrian Chester's private residence?" asked Doree who was all interest now. "Dick, you should have secured your information in some other manner."

"I suppose that's what Max will say too," he replied quietly while he studied the carpet, "but, Doree, I lay awake many a night revolving other plans only to find them all useless or unfeasible."

"Then forget what I said for I know it was only your attachment to Max that could have forced you to such a strange action."

"Thank you; then I'll continue my narrative."

He brightened up again. "Yes, I did get into the office although the creak of those hinges should have awakened an African in the last stages of the sleeping sickness."

"And was there no one in the house?" she interrupted again.

"Only Flavia; her father had left for Montreal a few hours before I began my first night's depredations. To continue then, this human brass band with all horns blowing made his way to the desk and took out the policy registers of the 'Northern'."

"You only imagined you made so much noise, —— But pardon my interruption."

"Not until about two o'clock on the second night did I make any discovery. Then a name in the register gave me the clew and slowly, very slowly the whole scheme was unravelled. However, on the last night came the climax in my desperado act. Rendered happily careless over my discoveries I must again have become very clumsy and noisy. Have you ever seen an elephant performing on a tight rope, Doree? Well so deft must I have been for I awakened the fair sleeper above."

"Flavia Chester!" cried Doree. "Did she come down?"

"Yes, she must have been at the door before I heard her step for in a moment the room was flooded with light and Old Sleuth was discovered seated at another man's desk. Then did I gaze and still continue to gaze in a most indecorous manner into the barrel of a gun held by Chester's janitor, and secondly into the fair orbs of Flavia Chester."

"In language most prosy I asked her to allay her fears, etc., when in reality I was myself frightened nearly to death. Shocked though she was Flavia believed that I meant no harm and even edified my quaking self by asking the janitor to step outside of the room. From the first she apparently had an inkling of my intentions but she was determined to make herself certain on the matter. Upon second thought now I realized that any outcry on her part would only compromise her own father. Upon her request, therefore, I informed her of that parent's rascally dealings in a debate which followed. Events worked out as I expected for she told me that the janitor would be sworn to secrecy about the night's episode."

"But what did she think of the morality of your act?"

"At one point indeed she was about to make some uncomplimentary remarks about Max when I interposed with the intelligence that Max had no knowledge whatsoever of my escapade."

Dick's voice became low again. "What pained me most, was the soul's distress so plainly depicted on her countenance. She seemed to be heart-sick over something for even her sharpest words were clothed in deep melancholy. At the conclusion she languidly pointed to the door, and when I looked back she had sunken into a chair and with her face buried in her hands was sobbing."

"You do not know how sorry I feel for Flavia Chester, for she is indeed a noble soul," concluded Doree gravely. "This struggle may be titanic and

beautiful to behold but it has driven happiness from too many homes."

"I believe you're right, Doree," replied Dick, rising for his departure.

"Do not be offended by any criticism I made of your strange act," concluded Doree.

Dick extended his hand in farewell while he gazed softly for a moment into her eyes. "No, I'm not offended, Sunbeam," was his feeling answer.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN.

THE FATALIST.

If Gilbert's success was remarkable in the capital of the Dominion, it could be termed phenomenal in Hull, the city across the river, whose many thriving industries sent forth their black smoke, as if in dark defiance of its Ontario neighbor. Two factors conduced mainly to bring about this result; firstly, Gilbert's diplomatic stroke in having the Mayor of Hull elected to the position of president; secondly, the thousands of shares which this man's influence elicited in behalf of the Western World, thus making of a large part of the inhabitants of Hull interested agitators for the company's welfare. So great had been the rush for stock, that even the poorest had changed their scanty savings into shares of the new organization.

There was a serious element of danger in this wholesale insurance of Hull, for in the event of a universal conflagration, even the strongest company might be bankrupted, and its stock become as worthless as so much blank paper. Many advised reinsuring the majority of these policies, but here came into play one of those peculiar traits of the picturesque manager. Max Gilbert possessed a confidence in the future so unlimited that like a gambler he would risk his all on the hundredth chance; strange of temperament and religious sentiment, he had of late too begun

to consider himself a favored son, from whom the gods must avert every calamity; thus falsely deluded he was assuming risks, before which more prudent men would quail. When his company was rich beyond all dreams, then would he consider this faint-hearted plan of reinsuring, but until then, they could not afford the subtraction of funds which reinsurance in other companies would necessitate.

Only after increased pressure did he yield, though very slightly, in allowing a small portion of Hull to be thus taken over by other organizations.

Thus moved their world during the prosperous months of January, February and March. The signs of proximate victory were ever becoming more distinct when the spirits themselves ushered in the most formidable antagonist against which their favored child had yet fought. It was on the twenty-sixth day of April, that this unexpected combatant made its sudden and direful appearance.

On the eve of the calamity, still fresh in the mind of every Canadian, Max Gilbert with his sister and Dick Kildare sat at supper in the former's home. Dick had again faintly refused to remain for the repast, but the light persuasions of the golden-haired girl once more produced their effect. The paleness of her countenance, however, would seem to evince that bodily feelings just then did not naturally tend towards mirth; she was leaning back in her chair, partaking only occasionally of the food before her.

"Goodness, but it's hot," she sighed, wiping the perspiration from her forehead.

"It's a cool spring day," responded Max kindly.

"You're just feeling a little ill, Doree. To-morrow you'll be well again."

Many topics were discussed during the course of the meal until finally came that engrossing matter of the reinsurance of Hull.

"We should really have more of our business in that city turned over to other companies," gravely remarked Dick, who was never backward in expressing his convictions.

"Nonsense!" jested the manager. "While we play the game, let's play it in a mighty manner; to make the 'Western World' a rich company, you must take the hundredth chance."

"A large conflagration in Hull would ruin us," persisted Dick pointedly. "Our insurance there is so large, that we couldn't pay for half the losses. We ourselves would be bankrupted, and the claimants forced to wait in vain for their remuneration."

"It's not just," he continued more animatedly. "Think of the thousands of dollars which the very poorest people of that city have sunk into our shares. Not only would their stock be utterly worthless, but you would not even be able to indemnify them for the loss of their homes—you'd ruin a city and deprive the inhabitants of the last cent of their hard earned money."

"Not at all," replied Max, with an exhibition of his quondam confidence. "You don't consider the wealth we're reaping into our treasury by not reinsuring." Then more carelessly, "What you speak of will never happen, away with the ordinary fears, the powers above will safeguard our work."

“Oh Max,” now exclaimed Doree, leaning forward in horror. “You’re tempting God. He has placed natural means for our use, and we’re not allowed to wish for a miracle or any extraordinary help without necessity. It’s a grievous sin to think that He must send his special aid to further our own petty plans. We are not yet divine, and God is not a slave to our caprices.”

“I’m no great light in church matters,” corroborated Dick seriously, “but there seems to be truth in her words.” Then inspecting his watch, “It’s half past six and I must leave you.”

“Business?” asked Gilbert, who had already abandoned the apparently insane topic of reinsurance—the gods were with him.

“I’ll be busy in Hull until to-morrow night,” replied Dick, still in a thoughtful mood. “The agent over there has requested my help for several very difficult insurances.”

“Do it well,” cheerfully exclaimed Max.

“I’m going to retire,” wearily asserted Doree, after the departure. So great was her lassitude that she had not been able to accompany Dick to the door.

“What’s the matter, Doree?” came now in startled tones from the brother as he leaned over her chair.

“I seem to be out of breath,” she declared. “It’ll probably pass off though.”

“Surely it will,” answered Max, trying to restore her cheerfulness. “I’ll assist you to your room.”

“Max,” she began with a strange sadness upon rising to her feet. “I hope God doesn’t punish you for tempting him. He’ll overlook it though, because

you didn't know what you were saying." Then with a faint return of her blithesomeness. "I want to kiss you, Max."

He stooped to her lips.

Max was very much concerned over this first illness of his sister. He abandoned further work, and spent the remainder of that evening in silent watching beside her bed. No symptoms of an alarming nature appeared however, so he consoled himself with the thought that on the morrow the house would again be brightened by the sound of her cheerful voice. Every hour that night a silent form tip-toed to her room, to assure himself of no change for the worse.

The morning of the twenty-sixth opened up with a stiff north wind that almost blew a hurricane over the cities of Ottawa and Hull. To the dismay of Max, his sister was no better, indeed was so weak, that she would probably have to remain in bed for another day. On account of this fact, he did not go down to the city, but occupied the time in his own private office at home.

It was about eleven o'clock in the morning, just after he had returned from a visit to his sister's room, that the manager of the "Western World" was startled by a protracted and terrific ring at his telephone.

"What under heaven can be the meaning of that?" he gasped half in fear. "Somebody must be in a terrible state of excitement." Dick was speaking from Hull, and sent his employer the following disheartening information.

"Fire has broken out among the houses of the mill-

hands. The wind is rapidly carrying away the flames, and the whole city of Hull is in immediate danger."

For once in his life this wonderful man lost his composure; a deathly pallor overspread his strong features, while the receiver was left dangling against the wall.

"My God!" he exclaimed putting his hands to his temples. "Can the hundredth chance have deserted me?"

Rushing madly upstairs he entered his room and hastily donned the oil-skin cap and clothes that he had worn so often in his lumbering days.

Meeting the housekeeper on his way down stairs he stopped for a brief moment, "There's a fire over in Hull," he exclaimed breathlessly. "Don't tell Doree anything about it. Her window faces the other way, so she'll not be able to see it herself."

Then was seen the strange figure of a man in river-man's garb, rushing frantically past the thousand figures that had likewise turned their hurried steps to the burning city. Straight towards the bridge spanning Ottawa and Hull did he make his way, fighting with terrific strength the hurricane that beat like a solid mass against his breast. Coming still nearer to the illuminated spot where must be the seat of the trouble, he perceived that the conflagration had already assumed alarming proportions. The volume of flames that the wind tore to fragments became more and more discernable, till he stood breathless before a row of nine houses, from which the fire was bursting in all directions. The first brief survey

informed him that of the nine, only three had been reinsured and that already a complete loss of ten thousand dollars was registered against the "Western World".

His eyes gleamed like those of a beast come to bay, and his hands were clenched.

"My God!" he cried again in horror. "That terrible wind can carry the flames over the whole city; if it would only stop, Hull may yet be saved."

As if in almost instant contradiction of the man who had tempted God, the wind, shrieking like a demoniac, increased its already high velocity.

In less than ten minutes the clouds of sparks that fell in ever increasing volume upon the neighboring roofs, had their effect, and more structures were involved in certain destruction. The whole block was converted into a living hell of heat in which mingled the anguished cries of the fleeing with the angry shouts of those who were vainly endeavoring to stem this torrent that seemed to have burst from the very abode of the damned.

The intense heat had already cleared a large area for itself, effectually driving back the surging excited throng. One alone remained in its scorching circle, seeming entirely oblivious of the pain thus inflicted upon him; the loss of the hundredth chance bore upon Max Gilbert's mind like a suffocating weight that rendered him incapable of motion. Cries of warning came from those beyond the circle of heat, but he heard them not.

"Ruined! ruined!" he cried now in frenzied anguish. "Nothing can save Hull. It is the punish-

ment for tempting God. I've ruined a whole city of people. We can never pay their losses, and all the poor people who bought my stock will never get one cent in return. I've ruined them all, ruined them all."

That he was helpless to prevent the dire calamity from falling upon the people who had so implicitly trusted him, aroused a sentiment nearly maddening with its black despair. Throwing his frenzied eyes upon the flames which were tearing the very vitals from his company, and reducing to ashes one home after another, he was seized with an uncontrollable impulse to put his own strength against the destructive elements, and to assist the efforts of the doomed inhabitants, even if his life must pay for the deed. It was nothing less than a species of insanity that suddenly seized the despairing man. The place where he was standing was already given over hopelessly to the flames, so running through the simmering heat to a point two blocks further he came upon the fire brigade doing valiant but vain battle against the tide of destruction. He saw at a glance that his assistance would be of very little avail in that well-trained corps. His own work lay rather with the hundreds of undisciplined inhabitants who were attempting to convey their valuables to places of safety. The majority of them never succeeded, for the fierce showers of live sparks and falling cinders sweeping along with the hurricane made them drop their burdens to fly for their own lives. Stentorian commands mingled with pitiable supplications and

terrible curses breasted the same air with humble prayers.

Most of them did not at first take notice of the unknown figure with the oil-skin cap, who leaped among them, performing prodigies of valor and daring that required almost a miracle for their safe execution; he was everywhere, bearing to safety the fallen victim, or grasping articles of furniture with a strength that was truly marvelous; the last to leave a house, the first to enter a new danger, he gradually drew the attention of the helpless crowd, which to the number of two hundred fell unconsciously under his leadership.

It was about two o'clock in the afternoon when his strenuous work carried him to an eminence from whence he could obtain a panoramic view of the fire's progress. The Eddy, Hull and Ottawa brigades were performing heroic service, but it was against the inevitable. Cutting a swath a half mile wide the fire was already extending past Bronson's wharf. One hundred buildings on eight streets were destroyed, including such ancient landmarks as the convent of the grey nuns, McKay's flour mills and Booth's saw mill and lumber yard. The wind veering to the northeast, carried the flames into the Ottawa suburbs, thus endangering even the Dominion's beautiful capital. On the river's surface between the two cities ploughed two score snorting tugs, as they carried away the lumber from the mills lined along the banks. The greater portion of Ottawa might still be saved, but the thriving city of Hull was certainly doomed.

Again Gilbert glanced upon the hideous sight before him. Where the conflagration had taken its start three hours before, was now a mass of charred walls and glowing embers. From there onward stood fifty houses that were swinging on their last flushed supports before crumbling to the earth. Still nearer him, for a length of six blocks, the vengeful flames were tearing at every roof, were bursting in smoky and red volumes from every door and window. With a loud crash he saw the mansion of Mr. — tumble to its foundation. He was still three blocks ahead of the destruction, but the impenetrable broad sheet of fiery sparks, gutting the high towers and flag staffs, bent like a moulted canopy over the congested buildings, ever pushing forward its work of destruction. The rending timbers crashed into one another; men shrieked; and mighty walls fell with the boom of thunder. The great manufacturing city of Hull had become a furnace into which the sky above and earth below seemed vomiting their fury.

The undisputed conquest of the flames struck with dismay the man who had been fighting them with an almost superhuman prowess; with tattered clothes and face begrimed with smoke he looked indeed the picture of one who had pitted his vain strength against the havoc-dealing elements.

"The city is lost; the battle is useless. The company has already lost four hundred thousand dollars and only a quarter of that reinsured," he spoke gazing about him as if in madness.

"There's no use staying with the flames any longer," came in quick tones from a person to his

rear. It was the Hull fire chief who had just ascended the hill with an assistant.

"We must leap ahead of the fire and try to break its course," answered the other fireman. "The Match Works and one-half of the city still are untouched."

"If it ever reaches the Match Works, the whole city is doomed; they contain enough inflammable material to set the world on fire."

"You're right there," observed his companion, "We must make a clear path between the factory and the approaching fire. A dynamiting gang with the assistance of the fellow with the oil-skin coat should be able to accomplish that much. Did you ever see any men work like that devil?"

It was then that the chief turning around became aware of the unknown's presence.

"Max Gilbert, is it you?" he gasped out upon nearer approach. Then changing to a more rapid tone, "No time for compliments. Collect your band and go to station No. 3, three blocks west of us. Take out all the hooks, ropes, and axes that you can find and start tearing down the houses we'll dynamite. My men will get the explosives in the meantime and begin the operations."

The thought that with the success of that plan three hundred thousand dollars could still be saved for his tottering company spurred Max Gilbert to the task. With a simple "I'll do it" he rushed back to the group which had obeyed his orders so faithfully for the last three hours. There was some difficulty in drawing them away from their homes; but the flashing eye, the imperious voice of their haranguer

could not long be disobeyed, and finally with a shout they followed him in his new venture. Several had already recognized him, but the strenuous battle for their own, did not give time to express surprise or sentiment. Of the hundredth chance, these ruined people had not yet begun to think.

The firemen had already begun their dynamiting when Max Gilbert arrived with the hardy troop of fighters, loaded with articles the chief had mentioned.

Lest his activity be impeded he hastily detailed a portion of his men to assist the policemen who were trying to keep back the pressing crowd, then cleverly subdividing the remainder, he began the systematic work of destruction in the wake of the explosions.

One frame structure after another was ruthlessly pulled to earth with a rapidity necessitated by the approaching danger.

Several times now he had heard his name mentioned amongst his followers, sometimes as a sign of recognition and again apart from him, in apparent anathema. He feared malicious spirits were spreading the very thought which was driving him almost to insanity. Fully three hundred had joined his ranks and were now listening to his words as he ran amongst them, commanding, advising and forcing with that irresistible coercion of his strong personality. The pale faces beyond the cordon had not yet recognized this smoke begrimed leader, and often a faint cheer burst from them as he personally performed some more courageous deed, or by his masterly oversight, pushed forward his men to more startling results.

Often he turned his eyes nervously to the immense manufacturing establishment upon whose saving depended three hundred thousand dollars of "Western World" money.

"Three hundred thousand dollars!" he would mutter again and again, then leap with revived energy to the task of broadening a path before the object of his solicitude.

The wind had in the meantime subsided somewhat, thus giving them a little more time for their strenuous work. Nerved by the thought of the immense amount of property at stake, the brave troop worked fiercely and incessantly for a whole hour. At about this time, however, their leader noticed that some were backward, while others again had altogether withdrawn from his command. These sullen figures became more numerous and, as a consequence, the heretofore heroic troop rapidly diminished in numbers.

Probably half of the onlookers were already informed of the tattered leader's identity. Several of the Hull people had known of the existence of the hundredth chance, so almost simultaneously this mischief-making rumor was sent on its dire way.

At this particular crisis, when only ruin stared these poor people in the face, no news could have stirred them to greater depths, for was not their last dollar taken away, and by one whom they had trusted implicitly? How could any man dare to take a gambler's chance with their hard-earned money? Their shares in the "Western World" were worthless, and they must probably be content with only half

the reimbursement of their losses. Policemen tried to break up the angry groups, but in vain. The news of the second catastrophe spread almost as rapidly and with as dire consequences, as the fire which had first evicted them from their peaceful homes.

Max Gilbert tried hard to make up for the deficiency of numbers by inciting the remainder to greater efforts. His position, however, became more and more critical, till, giving the order to heave strongly at a rope attached to a swaying wall, he turned about to see his men in utter and sullen mutiny.

To be left in this predicament when three hundred thousand dollars had to be saved drove him to desperation.

"Heave to!" he shouted once more, but no one would.

"Heavens above!" he cried, leaping wild-eyed among them.

"Heave to. We'll save the rest of the city."

"Heave, I say," he cried gesticulating frantically, and almost grasping them in physical coercion. "I beg of you to heave," he continued madly. "I must save the three hundred thousand. Help me, or I'm ruined. Three hundred thousand dollars must be saved; you must help me. I must save the rest of the city."

"Heave to, I beg of you, or the company is ruined."

His own words corroborated their private suspicions, and they turned their backs upon him.

Wild-eyed with desperation, he leaped towards the burning building and grasping the hawser pulled at it

alone, thinking in this insane moment to perform a deed that required the combined strength of twenty men. It was useless and he could only fall back in exhaustion. He was deserted.

Just then he found himself kindly addressed by a policeman who had separated himself from the crowd. "It is better that you give up, Mr. Gilbert. Some damaging report has been spread amongst these people, and as a consequence they refuse to work under you any longer. They're already clamoring for a different leader."

"More than that," he continued in a lower tone, "your life is in danger and if you wish to escape bodily injury you better leave Hull immediately. Three of my men will follow you across the bridge to see that they do not put their threats into execution."

Max Gilbert, smoke-begrimed, deperate, tattered, did not deign a reply, but bowing to the inevitable, walked slowly and almost feebly from the scene of his late operations. Not one word did he utter on his way to the bridge, where the three policemen left him to proceed alone.

Once within his own home, the recollection of an unwell sister made him bravely assume an artificial cheerfulness, and carefully washing all trace of smoke from his face, he donned his every-day clothes and turned his steps to her room.

On the way he met the housekeeper whose sudden brightening up showed how relieved she was at his return. "Oh, I've been in such a fright," she began with upraised hands. "I didn't know whether I was to pack the furniture, call Doree, or what."

"Let the furniture remain where it is," he answered shortly. "How is Doree?"

"She's sleeping," she answered. "Her forehead is just covered with perspiration. I believe she is very sick."

He turned about, thinking it better not to disturb her repose.

Max Gilbert tried to content himself in the office, but that intense desire to see the end of his disasters forced him into the street once more.

Securing an isolated position, apart from the vast throng on Parliament Hill, he again turned his eyes to the city across the river. By the spasmodic puffs of smoke in a certain direction, he knew that the work of making a gap before the fire was still progressing. The conflagration however, had made such rapid headway that he feared for the success of the undertaking. How far they had proceeded in their saving method he could not distinctly discern.

Then suddenly the blasting operations ceased, and a huge frame tenement that was to be torn down, became enveloped in the devouring flames.

"They've lost," he cried in anguish. "The fire is upon them."

All doubts vanished when not long after a mountain of fire burst from the huge Match Manufacturing Company.

He buried his face in his hands and sank wearily on a boulder behind him.

Max Gilbert was humbled to the earth for his proud self-confidence and his temptation of the God to Whom he made himself equal. Bitterly he realized

how, through his sin, a thriving company was virtually ruined and friends who had trusted him with their last dollar must wait in vain, not only for dividends, but for the principle on which they had placed so much hope. All the cash was consumed and that half million dollars of subscribed capital must be used to partially make up for this tremendous loss. What his enemy Chester could not personally effect, was left to the accomplishment of a higher Power. "Chester! Chester!" he murmured, though no longer vindictively. This was the enemy who would garrote the last dying efforts of the "Western World".

"The people! the people!" he cried to himself. "They are innocent; they should not suffer."

"I deserve it," he continued bitterly. "I made myself a God, thinking that no misfortune dare befall me. I forgot the existence of a higher Power Which claims its share in the deeds of men; Which must be asked for success and thanked for its giving. That good fortune which followed me I attributed totally to my own efforts, thinking that I was the dispenser."

"The hundredth chance," he repeated incoherently. "God does not gamble with men,—it is an insult to His face,—it is tempting Him. There is a God who wants our prayers and our adoration.—I refused, thinking He had to aid me."

Humbled and confounded, he was driven by the Almighty from his Tower of Babel.

A beautiful sunset came out upon the Laurentians, but on what a sight did it shine. A fire crescent seven miles long had surely destroyed one city and

wrought terrible destruction in the other. All left of Hull was the cathedral and a few factories of minor importance, while in Ottawa the thriving district of Chaudiere was completely wiped out of existence. Twenty-six million feet of lumber had been burned and with them the mills that supplied the poor people with work. To-night ten thousand people were homeless and ten millions dollars worth of property destroyed. The pitying night tried long to clothe the hideous scene with darkness, but flame and fire continued their harsh and cruel sway. In the night there was a day, but a day like those they have in hell.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN.

A CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM.

Doree's condition had in the meantime not fulfilled the optimistic anticipations of the household, for during the long and inexplicable absence of her brother, she had rapidly become weaker. Perhaps she was the only one to recognize an increasing danger, for no word of complaint dropped from her lips, by which the solicitous attendant could have arrived at such a conclusion.

About nine o'clock that evening the broken man had his first view of the sister since his ignominious expulsion from Hull city. An extreme pallor overspread her countenance, while corporal lassitude almost closed the eyes which only yesterday had sparkled so brightly. The flushes on the cheeks, those angel kisses, had vanished before the breath of fever.

Could misfortune be preparing another arrow to wound him even more cruelly than the first? No, one calamity had punished him sufficiently, and surely the God of Whom he knew so little would not thus stifle his last breath of life. Well now, might he exclaim with a Julian, "Oh, Galilean, Thou has conquered."

"Come in, Max," she greeted cheerily to the brother who was straining every effort to exhibit a similar cheerfulness.

"Well, well, Doree, what's the matter with you?" he inquired kindly, advancing to the bed-side.

"Nothing at all," she answered with forced carelessness. "Just a little more tired than usual, as Dick explains it."

"But you're sick," he insisted anxiously.

"Well, I am a little weak," she confessed, "and troubled slightly with a pain around my heart, but that'll pass away."

"Shall I call a doctor?" he suggested.

"No, Max, don't be silly," returned Doree, pursing her well-formed lips. She was evidently making a noble effort to conceal the seriousness of the malady, unconsciously thus relieving the brother who was already too heavily burdened.

"What has been darkening the alley all day?" she queried innocently, supporting the golden head on her palm. "It looked very much like the smoke from a fire."

"One of the factories in Hull burned down this afternoon," he equivocated with assumed indifference. "The strong wind blowing the smoke over our city made the skies look so dull."

"Was the factory insured in your company?" questioned Doree interestedly.

"We did carry a ten thousand dollar policy on it," replied the manager with a truth which lacked only comprehensiveness.

"I'm so glad it wasn't worse. You mustn't be angry with my remark at dinner last night, Max, when I said you were tempting God by not reinsuring more of Hull."

"You were quite right, little sister, and rest assured I'll never tempt God again," he answered

with a directness unintelligible to her. "This afternoon's fire made me fully realize the danger of such a proceeding."

"Oh, I'm so glad," she answered with a loving gaze. "So that fire was responsible for your absence. I thought that perhaps a matter of business had called you out of the city."

"I just thought I might be of some little assistance," he said.

"Come, sit beside me," she nodded sweetly. "Take that little book off the chair and place it beside my lamp."

"What kind of a book is it?" he asked absently as he obeyed the wish.

"It's the 'Imitation of Christ', which, next to the Bible, is the most remarkable book ever written. You can open it at any page and be always certain to strike a most pertinent truth."

Of late this young girl had begun to accuse herself of too much indifference in the matter of her brother's religious aberrations. Misinterpreted love had rendered her perpetually passive when, she thought, aggressiveness would often have been far more effective, especially since she was the nearest fountain from whence he might hope to draw the waters of truth. Innocent humility prevented her from seeing how her constant, silent example had made much greater impress than noise of words. Such disturbing thoughts always become more vivid in time of sickness, so Doree resolved to utilize this chance occasion about "a Kempis" to redeem her past negligence.

"If you bring the lamp nearer, I'll read you a

sample paragraph," she suggested, beginning already to turn the pages towards a certain well-known chapter.

"Very well," he observed with rising interest, "only do not attempt too much in your present weak condition."

Leaning her fair head to the light, she began to read in tones strangely significant. "'Be not thou anxious, stand not to dispute with thy thoughts, nor to answer the doubts which the devil suggest; but believe the word of God, believe his saints and his prophets and the wicked enemy will fly from thee'." After a pause she continued, "'God who is eternal and incomprehensible and of infinite power, doth great and inscrutable things in heaven and earth.'" (Bk. IV, C. 18.)

"I begin to see; I begin to see," came from the lips of the pensive form at her side. But what an effort did his every word require!

"Oh, I'm so glad," she cried, turning her eyes gratefully to heaven. But the very brief explanation had already exceeded her strength, and utterly exhausted, the golden head fell back on the pillow.

"Doree, you're very sick," exclaimed her brother quickly coming to her assistance. "I must get the doctor at once."

"You may, Max," she answered weakly, half smothering her words in the pillow. "There's a sharp pain around my heart."

The housemaid was hastily summoned to remain with the patient, while Max went downstairs to telephone for Dr. Marigold.

"It's an aggravated case of aortic stenosis," asserted the urban practitioner as an hour afterwards he came from the sick room, "or, in more conventional terms, the heart is suffocating in its own blood."

"Is there any immediate danger," asked the brother not only with lips but with eyes which hungered only for one answer.

"Were your sister of a more robust build, I would entertain the greatest hopes for her speedy recovery. Of course, there always remains the possibility of an unexpected turn for the better, but to be frank, and, judging these symptoms by their ordinary results, I must inform you that this first attack may have an element of danger."

"What can be done now?" asked Max almost desperately.

"Just wait. I've given her a sleeping potion so you had better leave her undisturbed for a few hours. I'll call at about nine o'clock. Good night, Mr. Gilbert; probably better news in the morning."

Max crossed the hall and entered his private office.

With his faithful Indian dog beside him, he seated himself before the grate. All the curtains were drawn; the room was enveloped in utter darkness.

"Come over here, Sticks," he murmured in the Indian tongue to the dog, "Let's have a little talk." Now must he brood over his own troubles. Doree, he was certain would recover, but what of the other calamity! All was lost.

Once more the reminiscent figure spoke in measured tones. "Do you think, old dog, we made a mistake in going away?"

The last remark, however, diverted the speaker's thoughts into a new channel, and he continued, addressing the dog: "We're not sorry, though, are we, pal? We've got Doree, haven't we? You like Doree, too, don't you, Sticks, old fellow?"

Another pause. "She doesn't know yet, does she, Sticks? She's too sick to hear about the fire."

There was something deeply pathetic in this figure of strength resorting in his present abandonment to these childish means of staving off the despair that tried so hard to overpower him.

No, he could not sit there in darkness while not far away the vortex of fire was consuming his all. He would ascend to the highest porch of his little home and watch a calamity that with every hour meant only greater destruction to his past ambitions.

"Come dog," he laughed strangely. "I'll be an Indian priest to-night; our cycle has come to a close; the fires of the tribe will all soon be extinguished."

Seated upon the porch a moment later, he watched grimly the clouds of sparks and smoke which arose from a once beautiful city.

"The vortex of fire! the vortex of fire!" he hissed. "It has dragged me to the bottom: Max Gilbert is lost!"

Again there was long silence. Fire-Sticks tried to engage the attention of his master but in vain; the kind master, the ambitious master of the olden days, would be known no more.

"Ruined! Ruined!" he exclaimed with raised voice, hiding his face in his hands. Had life's excessive burden driven him insane?

"Here, old dog," he laughed hoarsely. "We're going back to Silver Fox, back to the Dakotahs"—A long pause—"I'll be chief now and Doree will be princess."—"Ha! Ha! We fought a mighty battle and lost—I've ruined a city, I'm driven out"—Then as sad as human voice could make it,—“Yes, driven out forever, forever from my own.”

So engrossed was the man in his deathlike despair, that he did not notice the entrance of a white figure with loosely flowing, golden hair.

"Like the Indian follows his deadliest foe," he repeated with glowing eyes. "It's too late, too late."

A gentle hand was laid on his shoulder and he turned about to behold his sister Doree, a heavy white cloak thrown over her.

"Doree!" he exclaimed, only half aroused even at this sight. "You here? I thought you were sleeping."

Then all that's beautiful in womanhood, all that's sweet in childhood came forth in this remarkable girl. "Max," she began in heartrending tones, "I know it all; I know it all. You're ruined."

He didn't even ask her how she had discovered the fact. "Yes, Doree," he affirmed, his head sunk on his breast. "Your brother is ruined."

She climbed into his lap and clasped her hands about his neck. "Max, Max," she breathed distractedly. "You've given up in despair; I heard your remarks about flight to Winnepegosis."

He didn't seem to hear her. "How did you come to know about the fire?" he asked with dull interest.

"I didn't know, Max, until now," she explained

in tender accents, rising again to gaze on the horizon of fire. Knowing of the hundredth chance, she at once understood the dire results of the conflagration. "I know you're ruined, Max," she continued, raising her white arm toward the red scene. "I know your company is bankrupt to-night; I know you've ruined thousands of the poorest people in Hull."

A groan like final despair came from her brother. It cut her to the quick and again she sought refuge in his arms. "Max! Max!" she pleaded. "I'll not leave you though the whole world be against you. We'll go away together, back to Silver Fox, perhaps, and there we'll forget."

"You angel!" he exclaimed hungrily while he pressed her to his bosom. "Thank God, you're still here. I know you'll not leave me even in my disgrace."

Her sympathy was a little relief to a soul that now was arid as the Sahara. "Isn't there some means of saving the company; isn't there some scheme by which you can retrieve the company's losses?" she asked wonderingly. "We must rather think of the ruined people than of ourselves."

"There may be, Doree, but I cannot continue a fight against heaven and earth," he answered bitterly. "Were there but the faintest chance of success, I'd remain, but the battle has at last proved too much for me. I'm an outcast from men and from God."

"You poor brother," she sympathized, stroking his face. "You're very much discouraged; you're overcome by despair, aren't you. And what will you do now?" she asked in conclusion.

"Lose myself in the northern wilderness."

"And must we really fly from our own?" Doree asked innocently.

"Yes, our very lives are henceforth in danger if we remain in Ottawa."

And all this while Doree Gilbert was praying most fervently for a solution in the present crisis. At first she had fallen in with his plans, but the secondary thought of the thousands whom her brother had ruined brought her to the realization that flight would be most ignoble. With her implicit confidence in God she felt certain that a remedy for their troubles must finally be forthcoming; she had tried to be faithful to God and surely God would not forsake her in this hour of greatest need. And how she stormed heaven even for the brother who all these years had blinded himself to the truth. A just God now permitted him to reap the fruits of irreligion, namely, despair, but that same God could in another hour again be merciful.

"Max, not everything is lost," she began now seriously.

He just fixed a quizzical gaze upon her.

"It is easy to be cheerful when all our endeavors are crowned with success," she explained, "but it shows vastly more strength of character to bear up in adversity."

He thought there was truth in her words, but answered nothing.

"There has never lived a man, not even a saint who has not experienced his hour of darkest despair," she proceeded fervently. "Their true greatness,

however, was proved by the perserverance they manifested in such times: if they had confidence in themselves, in the future, but especially in God, they never failed to over-ride the difficulty."

She had evidently taken the wrong channel for his features betrayed no response whatever to her arguments.

"Can't you pray, Max?" she asked then in her old childlike way.

"Pray!" he cried out in dismay. "I'm the accursed one of heaven. What would be the use of my praying?"

With that she discovered the true state of his feelings. Empty as his soul was of all religion, it had succumbed to spiritual desolation. She must go softly now for he was so ignorant of the very principles which could have brought him consolation. "Perhaps you sinned, brother," she whispered sweetly, "but others sinned also and God nevertheless in after years made them great instruments of Divine Providence; Moses committed murder, yet God made him the leader of his people."

If not the religion of it, at least the story seemed to rouse him.

"I'd like to be the leader of these people," came the faint answer, but oh so dreamily.

"St. Paul," she continued, "was a persecutor of the Christians. God worked a miracle and made him the vessel of election."

His innate strength was awakening. "Yes, Doree, go on," he counselled yearningly. "Those stories are very beautiful."

"St. Peter denied Christ three times," she proceeded in the same hopeful tone, "yet that same Christ afterwards made Peter the first of the apostles."

"I denied Christ too, didn't I Doree?" he asked now as simple as a child. "Do you think Christ could reinstate me in my position?" She thought there was a faint throb of emotion in his voice.

"Sure, he could," burst from her confidently "With him all things are possible. He even raised the dead."

Even more childlike was his ensuing remark. "I'm dead; am I not, Doree? Can He raise me also?" As wax before the sun, so was his dark despair melting before the fire of her fervent faith.

"Just ask Him, Max," she responded, pressing her cheek once more against his. "Ask Him and you'll find out what a strange and happy future is still possible for you here in Ottawa."

Over the river a city was consumed by fire: here in the darkness of night a tender maiden was saving him from despair who had once been master of that city.

"But how, Doree; how can I retrieve my losses in Hull?" he asked now more earnestly. "I have no faith, but your beautiful stories tell me that my duty is to remain here and work confidently for those I ruined."

"Can't you think about some plan?" she replied.

Like a child he once more obeyed her and for fully fifteen minutes he thought of various schemes whereby he might once more fill his depleted treasury.

"Doree," he exclaimed meekly in the midst of his cogitations. "If we could ever recover ourselves, the company would gain such a prestige as would forever assure its success."

"Good! Good!" she assented, clapping her hands. He did not see the look of pain which crossed her countenance as she roused herself to this forced cheerfulness.

In the midst of all Max Gilbert's woes, there had suddenly shown forth a beacon light to guide him. Only for this salutary aid he might have turned his back on the people he had ruined, and returning to Lake Winnipegosis, have forever cursed the white race and the Providence which had driven him from civilized society.

Could he perhaps imbue every agent with fresh enthusiasm and thus by means of phenomenal increase in business rapidly fill his depleted treasury? No, no, no. Not a man would insure in the "Western World" after to-night. The lack of funds would render every policy insecure; again, with the people the company would be utterly discredited. He could do not further business in Ontario or Quebec.

Could he establish new agencies in the other provinces? He had a Dominion charter which had not yet been utilized. Again no, for the news of the discredited company would surely precede him.

"Doree!" he broke forth desperately, almost foolishly. "I wish I had half a million dollars to guarantee the payment of every loss for the next five years. Once people know that you can surely in-

.

demnify them in case of loss, they're prepared to talk business with you."

"Surely your friends can collect that sum," she innocently suggested. Once this brother began thinking of ways and means, she never doubted the result.

A weak smile played upon his features for the first time. "When Max Gilbert deceived them, the people would also have no confidence in any other man's credit."

"Why not ask a bank?" she helped once more. Certainly this child did not know the value of her innocent prayers. The brother answered only because such a conversation would keep the thought of the calamity away for at least a few minutes.

"A Canadian bank would not indulge in such speculation; they are too ——"

He never finished that sentence. A thought as wild as any dream he had ever had, suddenly took possession of him. Doree slipped from his lap. Throbbing in every nerve Max Gilbert arose to his feet. "England! England!" he exclaimed. "They'll do it for me in England. Every cent of my wealth in this world shall if necessary be spent to accomplish the result. I'll pay the greatest insurance company in the world to guarantee our losses. Then I'll fill all Canada from coast to coast with our agencies. In less than two years I'll pay every debt; I'll prove to these people that a Gilbert can be trusted; that a Gilbert will never forsake them. Doree, Doree, I'm off for England."

Never before in the history of Canadian insurance had any company resorted to the measures which this

man was contemplating. For the payment of a large annual sum from his own wealth, Max Gilbert hoped to persuade the London, Liverpool and Globe Assurance Society to guarantee the payment of his company's losses for the space of a year and a half. It was nothing less than a species of gambling wherein one company insures the other, or in other words, promises to pay any losses in excess of the poorer company's ability. The practice has in our later day come much into vogue, generally resulting in favor also of the richer organization. Having the wealth of this greater concern at his call for any emergency, he could once more instil confidence into agents and members, and hope finally to swing the fortunes of the "Western World" to an even higher pinnacle of success than it had yet attained. It was a duty owed to the impoverished inhabitants of Hull, although personally he stood to lose the immense payments for the guarantee.

Max Gilbert had conjured with a plan similar to this when his own "Western World" was first launched into life but the super-confidence in his own abilities made him think it unnecessary at that time. Now he remembered the expedient and utterly defeated he looked to England for the guarantee.

"Oh, it means success, Doree," he went on. "We'll seize victory from defeat; we'll overcome every foe; we'll enable the people of Hull to build up the most beautiful city in Canada. In two years or less, Doree, the "Western World" will have risen from the ashes of to-night's conflagration and have become the strongest company in Canada."

He was talking to the night air; he was addressing the burning city and its homeless people.

Then he turned to his sister. "Doree, your words of hope brought me back to life; your childlike questions gave me the clue to this plan. You're the saviour of these people. We'll surprise the whole of Canada,"—and he finished quietly, "but only with God's help."

Beside himself with joy and perhaps crazed by the disturbing emotions of the last day, the man did not at first see how the white figure beside him was vainly endeavoring to combat the return of her malady. Only when she was visibly swaying from side to side did he spring forward startled and dismayed.

"Doree!" he cried. "You're very sick. I shouldn't have kept you out here."

"Yes, Max, I'm very tired," she was able to gasp as he carried her to her room. "I don't think I'll recover."

Within ten minutes Dr. Marigold was again ushered into the sick chamber.

"What is your verdict now?" asked Max distractedly as he came into the hall.

"She will change rapidly from spasms of extreme weakness to unnatural strength for perhaps two days, when a comatose state will gradually overcome her from which there may be no awakening."

Max Gilbert could not utter a word, scarcely think, as this disheartening intelligence was borne upon him. Luckless manager of a bankrupt company, the ignoble outcast of two cities, his cup of sorrow was filled to overflowing. Great had been his grief as

the conflagration swept away a half million dollars of "Western World" money, to impoverish ten thousand trusting friends for whose ruin he alone and solely would be held guilty; now, perhaps in less than two days would his own golden-haired Doree, his sunlight, his very life, be taken from before his gaze, while he stood powerless before this dispensation of an inscrutable Providence. After all the vanished glory of past achievements, he was nothing but a creature, weak and finite.

Now he forgot the fire, forgot the saving plan, for his own Doree, dearer to him than anything else in life was suddenly brought to the point of death.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN.

NO. NOT IN ISRAEL.

The doctor's predictions found almost instantaneous fulfilment, for Doree underwent such frequent changes from lassitude to strength that the watching brother thought the end must come before morning.

About eight o'clock Dick was informed of her critical condition, and of course lost no time in repairing to the Gilbert home. In the hall the two luckless insurance men passed each other, but in the face of the new threatening danger neither felt it proper to discuss the fire which was still, though with abated fury, raging over the two cities.

After a few words portentous in their very brevity, Dick, with a large bouquet of flowers on his arm, was ushered into the sick chamber. Dick was horror struck at the change which only one day had wrought in this fair being. Slowly receding with the ebb of life's tide, the sufferer patiently yielded to its diminishing undulations, and 'mid sighs and prayers had already turned her eyes to the "bourne from whence no traveller returns".

With a new lease of strength returned also her desire to chatter away in her dear old manner.

"You'll get better though," continued Dick, trying to establish a truer cheerfulness. He gazed into the faintly smiling blue eyes and would not realize that they might soon be lifeless and smiling no more.

"I don't think so," she replied with heavenly resignation. "The suffocation in my breast feels just as if it will never go away."

"You can't die, Doree, for we need you too much," he protested, taking her hand.

"I thank you very, very much for your visit," came feebly from the pillow after perhaps five minutes' conversation. "You—must—go—now. I'm—getting—weak—again."

A sudden desire to press his first kiss on those pallid lips came upon him, but the ecstatic look of a countenance, which longed only for the embrace of the heavenly Spouse, made him halt with reverence.

Bright even in her departing, she divined his thoughts and smiled. "You may, Dick," she said sweetly, stirred to sympathy at his very noticeable grief. "It will be the first and last."

His great eagerness to grasp the opportunity showed how deep was the love he bore this youthful golden head, and for the first time in his life, he pressed those softly yielding, innocent lips.

"Sunbeam," he began.—It was a word of endearment he had not used since a certain occasion in the Spring woods, when, on the point of declaring his love, he heard a mischievous laugh, and his fairy had flitted out of sight. "Sunbeam," he said, holding his hands pleadingly before him, "don't you know I love you?"

"Surely Dick; I knew it all along," she smiled, dashing a stray ringlet of hair from her eyes. Then with more reverence, "But it's of no use. I'm going to a place where I'll receive an ocean of love; love

made Heaven possible in the first place, and love unending is the portion of those who attain it. Oh, Dick, it must be beautiful!" she finished rapturously.

"I suppose it is," he ruminated gloomily, "but I wish you wouldn't think of such a thing for many years to come."

"How grand to meet you in a land where only happiness to the full endures forever!" Her breath was coming now with labored difficulty. "Dick," she finished, while her agonized eyes were struggling with the new onslaught of pain. "I—like—you too, but you—must—go—now. Call Max, please."

He fixed on her a look as if he would rob the irresistible reaper of his grim embrace, then went to do her bidding.

The sight of the glassy eyes, the pallid countenance which in its whiteness only more perfectly reflected her interior purity, fully confirmed the physician's statement that the end was not far away.

"Max, doesn't the doctor say I'm going to die?" she sighed wearily, turning her face to him as he entered.

"You mustn't think that, Doree," he answered, while he moved a chair to the bed-side.

"Don't be sorrowful, Max, for God knows what is best," she breathed. "Since only a day or two of life remain, I'd like you to move me down to the parlor where there is more sunlight."

"Just as you wish," he replied, although for him the days of sunlight had come to an end.

She proceeded, "Would you also send word to two

persons that I'd like to see them? One is Father Cateau; the other is Chuck."

"There will be no difficulty in bringing the priest," he returned perplexedly, "but Flavia's father would certainly object to her entering our house."

"If you inform her of my sickness, she'll not let that prove an obstacle," confidently declared Doree.

"Very well; while I'm attending to the two messages, the maid can prepare a bed in the parlor."

The first to answer the summons was the kindly shepherd of God's flock, a well-preserved man, whose head was just turning into the silvery hair of old age.

"The earth does not carry such flowers long," he spoke slowly to Max on taking his departure. "Your sister is like the bud in the meadow, which hopefully exposes its delicate beauty to the skies, but finding only a coarse, material world, dies even in its awakening. The grateful zephyr that soothes our brows, may be far too strong for such a tender creation."

No sooner did Flavia Chester receive the message than she at once prepared to satisfy the wishes of one for whom, far back in academy days, she had conceived such a strong attachment. As to Max Gilbert, though she had bidden him "adieu" at the Fork in the Waters, she felt that that incident should in no way be a deterrent to any act of charity in Doree's behalf.

"Where are you going so early in the morning?" asked her father, chancing to meet her in the hall.

"To Mr. Gilbert's house," she answered curtly anticipating opposition.

"To Gilbert's!" he cried in astonishment. "You're going to that man's house? To the home of a man completely discredited in two cities!"

"His sister is sick," she went on with a hidden note of defiance. "Being an old friend of mine I cannot in charity refuse to see her."

"But her brother is my greatest enemy," protested Chester with a certain helplessness as he noticed her determination. "Surely you'll not mingle with that family."

Flavia Chester had always been a most obedient daughter, but, fearing now to discuss her rebellious intentions, she chose probably the more imprudent course of walking out without another word.

Her first sight of the hapless insurance manager was provocative of the deepest sympathy. The double misfortune of the last twenty-four hours had added fully ten years to this unbending oak. The proud bearing which he still maintained, was intended to deceive the world as to his true interior feelings, but beneath the artificial exterior, despair was waging a battle of almost intolerable vehemence. Truly the scourges of Providence were not desisting even in this, the hour of utter vanquishment.

Needless to say, Flavia grieved sorely for her dear young friend of whose serious sickness she had been informed by Dr. Marigold shortly after leaving her own home. She immediately offered to remain with her during the day, Max of course having to assume the duty of watcher in the long night hours. Charit-

able as ever, she at once began to remove obstructing knick-knacks and otherwise make a more convenient sick-room out of the parlor. For a long time Doree watched her devoted friend move silently as a shadow about the apartment, when, some strange thought entering the innocent soul, she suddenly called her to the bed-side.

"Take a seat near me," she begged sweetly. "I wish to talk to you for a little while, Chuck."

"But you're so very weak, dear; if you promise not to talk long, I'll do as you wish."

"I promise, Chuck, because I couldn't talk long even if I tried." And she smiled sweetly.

"Chuck you were very good to me at the academy," she began.

"You mustn't think of that," Flavia replied while her heart nevertheless glowed with joy to have won the gratitude of such an angel. "Selfishness really constituted the underlying motive, for it was done simply because I loved you."

"But I know differently, Chuck," she repeated, her eyes beaming in tender love upon her friend.

Flavia made no further answer, for her heart became filled with such love and sympathy for this frail creature, that she feared tears must accompany any effort at speech. Instead, she averted her moistened eyes, and prayed that God might not take from the earth this fairest flower.

"Chuck, my voice is very weak," came faintly from the profusion of golden tresses. "Put your head beside me on the pillow. Max has a strange faith,"

now came with strange abruptness from her tremblings lips, "but he'll change some day."

Flavia was on the point of remonstrating at the weakening efforts of this apparently useless conversation, when a slight gesture from the sufferer bade her not to be anxious.

"Max will find the true faith some day, Chuck." With what love did she not dwell on her brother's name!

Now the listener was becoming more and more puzzled over the possible intention of words strongly verging on the personal.

"Max is a nice brother," she continued. "He's big; he's good to me, and he's so very clever." The sick girl had now raised herself on one elbow. "Chuck, do you like my brother?" she asked with strange interest.

"Doree, you shouldn't ask me such a question," she responded, drawing back confusedly. "You know that I like all people who are good to you."

"That isn't what I mean," returned Doree, frowning her pale brow. "I wish to know if you love him?"

"A direct answer to your question might bring me into a most serious difficulty," parried Flavia, while a smile played on her lips. "You must therefore be satisfied with the statement that I do not hate your brother very much."

"I believe you love him," came in complacent tones from Doree as she sank once more on her pillow. "That's all."

Though the attendance during the day had been

apportioned to Flavia, yet Max Gilbert did not allow fifteen minutes to pass without an inquiry as to his sister's condition. Often, too, he remained a long while in the room, saying nothing, yet gazing upon that golden head as if he were devising some daring, unheard of scheme whereby he might repel the sure approach of the destroying angel.

But neither did any one know that as the pious Dorée lay upon her couch of sickness, she was like a martyr, storming heaven to send her intensest sufferings by which her soul might be cleansed of its last guilt, and rendered still more acceptable to the heavenly Spouse. That such a tender body be racked with pain, is a prayer seeming to our mundane intellects as cruel as would be its fulfilment; but there are mysteries in Providence which will never be understood until that final day of universal judgment when the exultant hosannas of the blessed will bring enlightenment.

When night had filled the sick room with its shadows, Max assumed the duty of watcher at his sister's bed-side. The increasing fever had weakened Dorée so much that she could no more enter into those child-like conversations which flowed so naturally from her innocent soul. Instead she patiently stared at the ceiling, murmuring ejaculatory prayers for the fulfilment of the holy wish mentioned before. In order that sleep might the easier overcome the fair sufferer, Max very considerately left the room in entire darkness. Towards midnight she fell into a light slumber.

Gradually an opalescent moon climbed the sky, and

casting its white beam through the window, gave her countenance a pallor as gastly as death. Alarmed, Max cautiously bent over her, but the still audible palpitation of her heart proved to his relief that the angel of death had not yet borne away his beautiful sister.

He had scarcely got back to his chair when Doree awoke with a start. She must have been entirely oblivious of the brother's presence, for with her feeble hands raised to heaven, she began praying loud and fervently. "Oh, Jesus, I thank Thee that, in answer to my prayer, Thou hast at last sent me these bodily afflictions. Give me only courage, then rack my body until the last stain be burned away which keeps me from your heavenly embrace. Jesus," she continued, "guide my brother, Max. That he may finally come to know Thee, I offer up this first night of pain."

Here ceased the bride, silenced perhaps by the intolerable torments which were to make her acceptable to the divine Spouse.

Max approached her with eyes moist for the first time in his life.

"Oh! I forgot that you were beside me," she exclaimed, half in fear. "You didn't hear what I said, did you, Max?"

"Yes, I did," he answered sadly, sinking on the bed beside her. "Doree, you don't know what you're doing, for surely your soul is pure enough now to enter heaven."

"I'm so sorry you heard those words," she murmured, "but, Max, the pains can be borne these few remaining hours."

He resigned his will before her superior faith. "You mustn't talk," he charged absently. "It weakens you too much."

"With the pains God also sent me a greater strength and, Max, I wish to use a little of it to talk with you. You need not turn on the lights for see how the moonbeams are flooding the room," she remarked, reaching forth her arm as if to touch the generous rays.

A new strength had really come upon the youthful martyr for her conversation ran along in unobstructed, sweet pathos, the while she playfully stroked Max's hand, or displayed other signs of returned animation. Through it all was betrayed not the slightest impatience with the pains which were coursing like a burning torrent through every fibre of her tender body.

Her revived memory recalled the smallest details of the years which they had spent together. "We lived happily, Flying Arrow, didn't we?" she smiled blithely, making use of his former Indian name.

"Very happily, Doree, but I wish we could be together just a few more years."

"It was kind of God to send me Flying Arrow at the very time when I was left alone in this big world."

That her mind was wandering, was shown by the next question. "Max," she asked with the sudden abruptness which had surprised another person not many hours before, "do you love Chuck?"

"Do I love Chuck!" he exclaimed startled. Then in a more subdued tone, "I'd rather not talk of any

other woman under the present circumstances, Doree; I can think only of you."

"Do you love her?" she playfully insisted, pushing forth her golden head.

"Perhaps I do, Doree. I'm not certain."

"I'm so glad you like her a little bit. Wouldn't it be nice if you and Chuck ——." Her wandering imagination now losing the trend of the thought, she unconsciously returned to the former topic. "Wouldn't it have been lonesome if Flying Arrow had never appeared, for then I'd have had no brother at all?"

"For both of us," answered the gloomy Dakotah.

At this juncture the pains became so intensified, that at her brother's request she desisted from further conversation.

The ensuing day was one long torment to the willing sufferer. As the hours fled one after another, her extreme debility allowed her to gaze only in mute agony upon Max and Flavia who were vainly devising every possible means to diminish the excruciating sufferings.

As towards the close of the afternoon a slight rally came, she petitioned Max and Dick to pull her bed to the window. "I want to see the last sunset," she requested softly.

The two obeyed her wish while with Flavia's added assistance the young girl was brought to a more upright position.

The shades of evening had already begun their attack upon the mellow colors of sunset. A first dusky charger had appeared, but, too weak to conquer the brilliant array, lost himself in their over-

whelming crimson glory. Another, and another came from their unknown covert, to meet no better fate, when forth sprang the reserves and the battle royal was begun, transforming the whole western heavens into a kaleidoscope of varying beauties. The sinking orb flushed a deeper scarlet as its bright minions repelled the first onslaught. But it was not to be thus, for still more reserves were brought into action to surround gradually and entirely the knights of the gilded trappings. Then did the gaudy array lose spirit, and turning respectively into pink, silver, gray, vanish into nothing. Their defeat was complete. Like the sufferer of twenty-one who had watched them so interestedly, they were too beautifully and delicately formed, to withstand life's grim battle.

She turned about to Dick. "It was just like the sunset we saw over the Ottawa. Nothing earthly lasts forever," she continued in low, solemn voice. "This is not our lasting abode. We must all—leave—at—some—time."

Another spasm of weakness prevented her from enlarging on the thought. While the two men replaced the bed in its former position, Flavia was preparing to return home.

"Come early to-morrow morning, Chuck, because Father—Cateau—is bringing—me the Viaticum," gasped Doree.

"I'll be here at five o'clock," answered Flavia, and bending down to kiss her friend, she left the room.

The pathos of that night in the moon-lit chamber impressed itself forever and indelibly upon Max Gil-

bert's memory. So violently had become the sufferer's pains and so helplessly were her arms flung about in unconscious effort to obtain relief, that fearing the death agony had already set in, he hastily called up Dr. Marigold. Some sedatives were administered though without effect, and he departed again saying that death would not come before sunrise. The silent watcher could almost see the fever hacking mercilessly at her debilitated body.

Towards three o'clock there appeared a slight abatement. "Can't you pray that the pains will cease?" distractedly pleaded Max as he bent over her.

"They're good for me, Max," Then as she turned her eyes reverently to heaven, the supernatural again found voice. "All for my brother, O Lord; all for my brother."

"You angel," he exclaimed fervently and with tremulous voice. "You're too good to remain on this earth; you must go."

"Max," she muttered wearily, "I have so much to—say—to—you—about heaven but—I'm—too tired. I love you so much, brother."

To himself the stricken listener moaned, "If this angel must die to show me the faith, then, O God, I promise never to cease until I have found it."

Already at four o'clock in the morning, Dick made his appearance, to inquire after the one he loved. He was allowed to speak only a few words to her as she was already in the midst of her pious preparation for the Viaticum.

Neither of them fully realized how deep was the sanctity of the young girl, until they came to witness

this sublime act; her prayers and ejaculations were so vehemently affectionate as to be easily understood by the two attendants; many they were and sweet and occasioning no end of surprise at the vivid memory of one so near death's door. Raising her hands to heaven, she would again and again breathe forth those beautiful words:

“Jesus, Jesus, come to me!
Oh, how much I long for Thee!
Come Thou, of all friends the best,
Take possession of my breast.

Then would follow that yearning prayer, rendered in a manner which must have stormed heaven with its pathetic piety:

“My soul is dark away from Thee, my own;
My eyes are dim in seeking Thee, my own;
My flesh doth pine away for Thee, my own;
My heart heaps up with joy to Thee, my own;
My spirit faints receiving Thee, my own.”

At five o'clock Flavia arrived and immediately set about preparing a little table for the sacred function.

To Doree's great distress when Father Cateau entered with the beloved Spouse, she found herself so exhausted that she could not utter another prayer, not even an ejaculation. The ritual had begun, but still no prayer would come to her lips.

“Fl—Fl—avia,” she now whispered.

Her loving attendant bent over her. “Pl—play—on—pia—no. ‘Oh—Lor—d—I—am’.” Extreme weakness prevented her from finishing the sentence but Flavia understood she was to play that tenderest of hymns, “Oh, Lord, I am not worthy.”

Light were the notes, as if fearing to disturb the air, so soft that they could not wake an angel. Like the pitiable wail of an angelic spirit who had mistaken the way, to find himself at an infinite distance from Christ, the Beloved, came the silvery notes, now in submissive humility, and again in such rapturous love as would envelop heaven itself.

Her Divine master was approaching and following the notes in their sublimity, she received the grace to make such an act of charity as raised her almost visibly from the bed of pain.

Doree had reverently opened her mouth to receive the Lord of all, when a startling exclamation broke from her pallid lips, "The pains are gone."

After a moment, hearing his name pass her lips, Max bent over her. "Max," she breathed, "You'll not give up?"

"No, Doree, never."

"And you'll win, Max; you'll save these people."

"Yes, Doree."

"And Max, I know that some day you'll believe as I do." In answer he pressed a kiss on her pale brow.

She cast another long, grateful look upon her brother, and turned to heaven with the sweet exclamation, "Oh, God, I thank Thee." Then taking his hand she proceeded with the adoration of the Lord within her breast, ever and anon exerting a gentle pressure upon it, while her lips would give faint utterance to repeated prayers of gratitude.

Finally she opened wide a pair of eyes upon which the film of death had already made its appearance. "Come," she said with painful effort, "I'm dying."

Flavia and Dick hurriedly took their positions at the other side of the bed.

"I—love—you—all," she continued in disconnected syllables. "Chuck—goodbye. Dick—goodbye. Max, goodbye. You were a good brother."

Seizing a momentary rally, she gazed upon Max and Flavia's hands as if she would have them in her own. They obeyed her mute wish to find them being slowly drawn into each other by the dying girl so that when Doree again withdrew her own, two hands lay clasped upon her breast.

The moment was too sad for Max and Flavia to give more than a moment's thought to the strange significance of this last act.

"Jesus—Jesus—Jesus," came more and more faintly from the departing one. There was a slight quiver, another appealing look to heaven, and the soul that had lived on love, went to the land that is love forever. The bride was in the embrace of its Beloved.

Slowly the clasped hands drew apart and all three sank on their knees to pour forth the prayer and tears of their overburdened hearts.

Strong was the brother's love, and strong his grief. Long after the other two had departed, did he kneel beside the lifeless body, his heart bleeding for the sister who could brighten his days no more.—But soft—we hear a moaning voice—"Not mine O Lord, but Thy Will be done."

CHAPTER NINETEEN.

A MAGNANIMITY THAT SPANS CONTINENTS.

It is a charitable custom to leave the sorrowing in peace, that thus they may the sooner return to their former happiness. But no sooner had his beloved Doree been laid in the grave, than Max Gilbert was confronted by an angry multitude demanding redress. A bankrupt company must be redeemed: a ruined people must be indemnified.

Returning to the office, he found before him a sealed communication from the president whom the reader will remember was none other than the mayor of Hull. Lest he be considered an abetter of his people's ruin, this individual now deemed it politic to sever his further connections with the "Western World". A resignation of course was only of minor importance in the long array of details claiming Max Gilbert's attention. Considerate friends did not immediately inform him of a recent demonstration before the marble front building, which had been so violent as to require police interference.

Thompson, the temporary president, having in the meantime made a rough calculation of the company's indebtedness, an informal meeting was called to consider the best manner of procedure in the crisis. Max Gilbert's perseverance was tested severely as he gazed upon the almost endless columns of fire losses; not only would their treasury be emptied but the

greater part of the people's investment would have to be brought into use. "There was the rub," for the impoverished inhabitants of Hull had contributed largely to that sum, and thus receiving their own lawful money, would still not be indemnified for the loss of their homes.

"There is scarcely any need of deliberation," spoke one director, bolder than the others. "With such a large indebtedness, we can never retain our prestige with the policy holders and must as a consequence expect to lose them all. Granting even that fifty thousand dollars of our subscribed capital remains after the payment of all losses, we still have not sufficient money for future security."

"Your every word is true," slowly answered the manager, not removing his eyes from the figures. "For the first time in our history, an apparently insuperable difficulty stares us in the face."

Then this ingenious man gave them another surprise. "Delay the declaration of insolvency but one year; if at the end of that time I have not found a means to refill our treasury we'll go out of existence. I'm going away for a short time but when I return I'll probably have solved our difficulty."

Max Gilbert's plan was adopted sullenly, and perhaps for the sole reason that no other presented itself.

Max and Dick walked home from that meeting together.

"When do you leave?" asked the younger man.

"As soon as all my property and stocks are turned into cash which means in probably three days. The venture may require every cent I have."

They sat down in the parlor.

"Do you remember any of the pieces which Doree used to play?" asked Max dreamily. "Or better still, can you sing that hymn of Flavia's, 'O Lord I am not worthy'?"

"The music is in a little black book," replied Dick. "If I can find it, I'll try to sing it for you."

After a short search, he discovered the book and proceeded to sing the hymn which had sweetened Doree's last hour. Once more then did the scene of that pious death come vividly before the gloomy manager. The plaintive melody had its desired effect, for it left him with the calm in which his mighty resolutions could be maintained.

"I'll never fly from duty," he exclaimed to Dick. "I promised Doree I'd never forsake these people. It's a promise to the dead and must be kept."

Almost three thousand miles beyond the misty horizon of the great St. Lawrence lay England, the land of his hopes. Max Gilbert was computed a wealthy man by results of efforts both in the insurance business and in other stock speculations, where his highly developed astuteness had given him a signal advantage over less gifted individuals. Within the three days all stocks and bonds were hastily sold, and his beautiful home even mortgaged to supply him with the necessary funds for this venture in faraway England.

More disagreeable news was brought to him on the eve of his departure. The opposing agent, Fink, had profited by his absence to inaugurate such a campaign of villification as can come only from one of

his unscrupulous nature. Ascribing the most sinister motives to Gilbert's departure, he was surely strengthening the hatred of a people who had already chosen to call him a "swindler" and "wrecker of homes". But that was not the end of his scurrility, for by some strange means this perverter of truth had learned of the manager's former life among the Dakotahs, a bit of news which under Fink's manipulation, could be turned into another choice morsel for the gullible multitude. Now perforce, this man's life had to be a huge fraud perpetrated on the unsuspecting public. Details were of course required for circulation, so in consequence it must be added that he was an Indian of evil repute and illegitimate birth. Cast from the society of his superior red brethern, he had come to Ottawa and by the aid of lies and sensational advertising, succeeded in swindling the people of half a million dollars. Max Gilbert did not at present have the time to refute such manifest slanders, so giving a few final instructions to Thompson, he set out for Quebec where he was to take ship for the land of his hopes. He would let the scurrilous rumor take care of itself until he returned from England.

At the railway station Max was very much surprised to meet Flavia Chester. Apparently in spite of public opinion and her father's mandate she would show the world that her friendship for the luckless manager was based on more than passing success or failure. Deep in his heart Max thrilled with pride at her display of courage, especially when others were disclaiming even acquaintance with him.

"I've come to bid you farewell, Mr. Gilbert," said Flavia prettily as she extended her hand.

"I thank you for this heroic act," he spoke feelingly, still grasping her hand.

Flavia gazed confusedly upon the ground. Then she recovered herself.

"Dick told me you were leaving," she recovered with the prettiest of smiles. "And he told me the whole reason of your departure."

"Did he?" Max followed up interestedly.

"Yes, but he pledged me to secrecy."

"Only five people know of this venture," Max continued. "It is my last desperate attempt to stave off ruin."

They had by this time come to the end of the plank walk. Flavia cast her eyes dreamily towards faraway England. "Max Gilbert, I know you'll succeed," she began, still gazing into space. "My best wishes accompany you at every stage of your journey. It is a cause of deep sorrow to me that you are so afflicted at present, but I honestly believe your manhood will find some means of over-riding the difficulty. I knew I bade you 'adieu' many months ago and 'adieu' it must be again, but at this critical juncture I thought a little word of friendship would not be valueless."

How Gilbert's heart went out to the woman who could speak such words in the hour when they were most needed. To-morrow all Ottawa would know how she bade farewell to one they considered a traitor; trusting to the last she had braved their displeasure.

"Miss Chester," he replied looking her steadily in

the eye, "you have to-day given me a proof of friendship which I'll never forget. It gives me the courage to make a final request: may I upon my return spend just one evening with you. Make it 'au revoir' just once, then if the powers above make it 'adieu', let it be 'adieu'."

The request took Flavia unawares and even when she replied she could not have given the reason of her answer. "You may," was the simple answer, then she acted as if she would recall her words, but upon second thought left it as it was.

"They are calling for the passengers," declared Max extending his hand. "Farewell until the evening I see you again."

"Success," was her answer. She would not say "farewell". And with bowed head she turned her steps homeward.

Then for Max Gilbert it was on to Quebec, and out upon the blue waters. As the shores receded into mist, leaving the ship finally surrounded only by a watery world, an irresistible longing for this woman came over the bereaved, luckless and maligned manager. Far back in Canada stood an empty, cheerless home wherein he must again reside after his return. Life with its chain of adversities had of late become too acrimonious.

Max Gilbert's actions during these days did not escape the observations of the ship's passengers who frequently whispered together about the silent man standing at the rail and gazing towards Canada like another Napoleon towards his beloved France. So eager was he in his great work that not three hours

after they landed in the great English metropolis, he was already pushing through the glass doors of the world's most powerful insurance company. He scarcely realized with what difficulties his mission was fraught, until he was ushered over marble floors from one official to another, till finally he stood in the sumptuously furnished office of the manager.

It was but natural that an official constantly dealing in thousands and even million dollars should not display any great avidity to succor a toppling concern in one of the colonial possessions.

He was a middle aged man with iron grey hair and a pair of dark eyes that looked very keenly from his waxen features.

"I can see nothing but impossibilities in your plan, Mr. ah—Gilbert," he remarked at the end of the explanation. "My answer is of course, not final, for all matters of such importance must be left to the decision of the whole board."

It is probable that anyone but Max Gilbert would have been summarily dismissed, but as the conversation proceeded, the astute Englishman recognized in him that wonderful acumen and lavish broad-mindedness which go to make up the ideal insurance manager.

Great minds love communion with their own. It was with some pleasure therefore that the manager of the Liverpool, London and Globe Company looked forward to the afternoon interview, as also to those following during the next three days. Never before in his experience had the colonial possession sent forth an insurance manager with such advanced ideas, such

wonderful insight into commercial problems, such depth and perspicacity. What first was doomed to failure became possible by reason of Gilbert's magnetic personality, so that when the hazardous request was brought before the company's assembly, it found its most ardent supporter in the manager himself. These men were however true financiers, for after a long consideration they could only decide to leave the matter on the table until the ensuing week.

In the intervening time Max was introduced to several of the titled directors, thus securing an opportunity to agitate his scheme of redemption privately. These Britishers were all conservative at heart, mindful of tradition and slow with innovations. To substantiate the statements of the petitioner, a dozen cablegrams flashed during these days from the English company's offices across the broad Atlantic. Worry and indefatigable labor received their reward however when a week afterwards, for the payment of a large sum, the Liverpool, London and Globe consented to guarantee the payment of any losses which would perchance exceed the strength of the Canadian company.

During that whole succeeding night, Max Gilbert tossed nervously about his bed, and ever and anon could be heard his strange mutterings in the Dakotah tongue, "Success! I'll save them yet! Once more, like the Indian follows his prey! Success! Success!"

A letter from Thompson awaited him at his hotel describing a very stormy session when the directors met for their monthly meeting. A very noisy deputation, undoubtedly urged on by the villianous Fink,

and seconded now by our former acquaintance Jabez Nicholson, utilized this opportunity for demanding the immediate resignation of the company's manager. Thompson was able to placate them only with the assurance that Gilbert would voluntarily step down from his position if he could not repair the fortunes of the company within a year.

Eight days afterwards Max himself appeared on the scene, ready to begin his great work of converting order from chaos. He could in no manner allow Chester to discover his scheme since by so doing that astute individual might parallel his work, and rob him of half the fruits if not even to completely frustrate it. Accordingly he had to locate his several hundred new agencies in towns sufficiently removed from Ottawa that his enemy could not gain the knowledge of their existence.

While Chester was gloating over his phenomenal successes in Ottawa, probably seven hundred agencies in the other six provinces would more than make up for the defections. From the Atlantic to the Pacific there was to be created such a net-work of new centers as would speedily fill the depleted treasury of the "Western World".

The fertile provinces in the Canadian West were made the first scene of Max Gilbert's labors. Manitoba, the premier province, was canvassed even to the ends of its cultivated fields. Arrived at the northern limit, he was but four hundred miles from the Dakotah wigwams where resided Chief Silver Fox and the rest of that warlike band; fain would his curiosity have drawn his steps thither, but prudence

and duty counselling otherwise, he turned his eyes to the neighboring province of Saskatchewan. A like performance characterized his actions here, and Regina, Moose-jaw and its lesser towns were speedily made a part of the great net. Pushing his way after many digressions two hundred miles further west he had placed sunny Alberta among his conquests. Then came British Columbia, the last province of the line; its scattered towns of the Crows Nest Pass and Kootenay Valley did not entail so much time, and were but a preliminary to the indefatigable labor in the flourishing city of Vancouver. Finally Max Gilbert crossed the straits of Juan de Fuca and entering the beautiful British Columbian capital, stood like another conqueror in the extreme western city of North America. Half of Canada had been converted into a hive of industry that was within a year to place the "Western World" in the first place among Canadian companies.

All of these agents were fully informed of the Hull disasters, yet that guarantee of the rich English company, giving to Max Gilbert's institution a greater prestige than it ever possessed before, made them most desirous to be numbered among its workers.

"Do not be worried if all in this vicinity should leave you," counselled Max to his agent the evening of his return, "for our agents in the other provinces will bring five times as much business as you're losing. While I'm engaged on my eastern trip you may occupy yourself mainly with the work in the office. This part of my plan will require more time, since the east is much more thickly populated than the

west. I intend to push forward as far as Prince Edward Island and thus connect the two oceans with our chain of agencies."

"You'll surely succeed," assented Dick, "but I would warn you to have some care of Fink's new campaign. That slander of your Indian birth is increasing in proportions and may one day prove as big an obstacle as the Hull conflagration. The man is a bigger villain than Chester and lets no opportunity pass of putting a false interpretation on your actions. Nicholson, too, has become very active of late."

"I am not the only vindictive spirit in Ottawa," murmured Gilbert to himself. Then looking at Dick, "Have the western agents sent in many applications thus far?"

"About seven hundred," answered the agent.

"They have just begun," Max went on. "A few weeks will see them working to better advantage."

Dick arose. "You look so tired, Max, that I'll give you an opportunity for a good night's rest."

"A good sleep will not do much harm," he answered, scarcely able to suppress a yawn, "for there haven't been many such within the last two months. I leave with the Imperial Limited at six in the morning. Good-night, Dick."

"Truly an indefatigable worker," murmured the agent, admiringly, as he walked down the path.

With that guarantee from the world's strongest insurance company before them the Quebec agents likewise considered it a good fortune to be even asked to labor for the "Western World"; everywhere

only affirmative responses were forthcoming, and again did a network of ardent workers form themselves now over the French provinces. So pleasant did the work become that Max Gilbert already saw victory perched upon his banner.

In the meantime however, Fink's slander was steadily making headway, even as an insidious snake which poisons every shrub and blade of grass lining its course. At first the better class had paid no attention to the rumor, but gradually also these came to believe the falsehood. Now all remembered his pagan principles and his frequent exclamations in a strange Indian tongue, and putting two and two together, concluded that there must be some truth in the report. His dark hair and general athletic appearance were also factors now brought into service to substantiate suspicion. If sinister motives were not at the bottom of his sensational life, why then had he observed such complete secrecy on the matter? Surely truth does not shame the light. Had he been merely a white man parading under false colors, it would not have been so galling, but that a whole community should be deceived by an Indian of bad reputation and illegitimate birth was totally beyond their endurance.

"It is useless to canvass any longer in the city of Ottawa," Dick had written, "The feeling against you has become so acrid that we must almost fear for our personal safety."

To this communication, the agent received the following telegraphic reply: "Quit canvassing. Success here remarkable. Home in two weeks."

He did not realize to what proportions the evil report had grown until returning home, he received a more complete explanation from his faithful agent.

"The people are saved," continued Dick, "for your seven hundred agents will surely send in enough applications to fill the treasury within a year; Thompson has asked the insurance department to give us that length of time. But then," he concluded apprehensively, "you must prove your honest white birth or you'll be the manager of the 'Western World' no longer."

Max Gilbert was not the slightest disturbed at this turn of events.

"It's not alarming, Dick. We're riding to victory now and we'll ride it to the end. As to this calumny, a message from Silver Fox with a few affidavits from Portage la Prairie and Sault Ste. Marie lawyers will clearly vindicate my honest birth. After a while, Dick, after a while, the 'Western World' and its manager will again be in the height of favor."

Then he turned meaningly to his agent. "Our enemies are fighting us so hard that we must retaliate. You remember the way Chester incriminated himself with the false report?"

"Yes," Dick remembered.

"You then promised to secure exact details of how the rascality was carried out?" he asked, again, holding the other's gaze.

"Yes, I have it already."

"You have?" exclaimed Max excitedly.

Then Dick surprised the manager with a detailed and convincing exposition of Chester's false account-

ing. Max rubbed his hands with delight. "Grand! Grand!" he ejaculated. "Now when we spring our surprise upon the people, we'll also settle our accounts with Chester. Our victory will be complete in every sense of the word; your figures will sound the death-knell of Chester et al. But how did you secure such detailed statistics?"

With the consequent explanation Max was amazed and dismayed; especially did he dislike the entrance of Flavia into the last scheme. Surely she must have drawn a very depreciative conclusion of their business offensive.

"I must indeed thank you for the information, Dick," he said, taking the agent's hand "although I would scarce have counselled this novel method of procedure. Still I'll think only of the fact that you did it because of your strong friendship for me."

CHAPTER TWENTY.

THE LAW OF THE HORNED HAND.

Fire Sticks would still yelp joyfully although old age, with its ravages, was fast overtaking the faithful canine. Half-blind, and limping, he nevertheless jumped about his master, licked his hand, and gave other evidences of joy at his rare returns to the desolate home.

"You're getting old," remarked Max, patting the dog's head. "You're soon going where all your Indian brothers went."

"Yelp, yelp," answered the canine, rolling on his back to entice his master into play.

Rest was not yet, for in these days Max Gilbert must again be on his travels. The far-seeing manager knew well that the mere appointment of numerous agents would not in itself save the company for these might easily lose enthusiasm, and consequently not bring in the new business in sufficiently large quantities to effect the great redemption. To offset such a disappointing possibility, he must constantly visit and re-visit them, ever instilling new fervor into their efforts: from coast to coast must he travel, time and again, from province to district and vice-versa, covering probably fifteen to twenty thousand miles before the hopeful day when all would once more be peace, and he have paid off his immense indebtedness.

But now during the short interval, when he should have taken a month's needed rest, he was lost and lonesome. So incessant had been Gilbert's labors that he had not ridden in his white automobile oftener than half a dozen times. This evening, however, if only to relieve the monotony, he would take a short run in the "Silver Fox", a name he had given it after the old chief of the Dakotahs.

On account of the intense feeling against him in Hull, he kept it in the territory south of the river. Over many smooth roads did the beautiful car glide, but Gilbert's preoccupied look would lead us to suppose that not even this recreation was giving him full satisfaction. Then he remembered the evening which Flavia Chester had promised him. Truth compels us to say that he had never ceased to look forward to this engagement. Why not make this the evening? Luckily too he knew just where to find her.

Not one mile from the city limits, in a large house of red brick, Flavia Chester was just then passing a week with her aunt, Mrs. Thornby.

Once more did he crank the "Silver Fox" and turn its head now to that home one mile distant from the city. He must have been in a peculiar state of mind, for he pushed his car over the road at a speed fully three times beyond the law's allowance. Soon, with a whirr and a click, he came to a stop before the Thornby house, to behold Flavia Chester standing alone before a cluster of firs, and apparently admiring the beauty of the balmy autumn evening.

With the setting sun to outline her figure and sur-

rounded by its own soft nimbus, she appeared like a fairy suddenly sprung from the ground; no, the bright, classical countenance made her seem rather as the progressive spirit which stands guard over a century.

A new thrill passed through Max Gilbert, when her musical voice rang out in greeting. And how elastic, how scintillating with youth was her step, as pushing open the gate, she came forward to meet him! Having turned off the switch, Max slipped down from his seat and grasped the dainty hand which bade him welcome after the long absence of four months.

"Where have you been all this time, Mr. Gilbert?" she began with true interest while her eyes sparkled with joy.

"Wandering about our fair dominion, trying hard to reconstruct the fallen fortunes of the 'Western World'." Somehow he always felt utterly secure in giving this woman a hint to his great plans, although her betrayal could most certainly have frustrated their successful issue.

"This is the final struggle," he confided standing clear of the auto and speaking in his old strong way. "After a year the shares of every stockholder will again have their par value, while the matter of my own white birth shall also be fully proven. Will you remain with your aunt very much longer?" he asked abruptly while his sharp eyes seemed to hold another request in waiting.

"A few days more, although I am practically living

between two places; Mrs. Thornby's auto takes me into Ottawa almost every day."

"I have come to ask you to fulfill a promise you made before my departure to England," he began rather slowly.

"O, the evening!" she recollected shyly retreating a step.

"Yes, I wish you to make this the evening," he suggested tentatively.

"If you will return before nightfall," she whispered, bending forward nervously.

"I will," answered the exile, with only half suppressed gladness.

In a few minutes she returned from the house with her auto veil, and they began the drive which was to have such unexpected results.

"What is your destination?" asked Flavia, turning to him somewhat apprehensively, as they were rapidly approaching the city of Ottawa. The expectant thrills following her strange resolve silenced her for the first few minutes.

"Eventually we will bring up at Chaudiere Falls," replied Gilbert between pauses as he skillfully manipulated his lever. "Under this autumn sunset, it will furnish a beautiful spectacle."

The orb's crimson rays were already playing happily with the wavelets of the Ottawa, or were darting mischievously about the towers of the city before them.

"Did you take notice of that man in the grey cap?" she asked suspiciously as they crossed the bridge.

"He was just more than usually interested in our

auto," replied Max fearlessly. He had noticed how his companion drew the veil more closely about her face.

"He remarked in French that this car must be the 'Silver Fox'," she explained in the same low tones.

"Is that all?" smiled Gilbert, as he decreased his speed.

"No; at that remark his companion cursed you, and swore they'd even scores before very long."

"They're probably ordinary brawlers," he explained to sooth her apprehensions. "Such maledictions have been ringing in my ears for four months and still I'm hale and hearty."

"You do not perhaps perfectly realize the height of ill-feeling which has risen against you during your absence," suggested Flavia, now more strongly as she became accustomed to her strange position. "Father has even hinted at bodily harm, should these people ever find you within their city."

The brave man laughed. "They have discovered that I am a swindler, renegade, and wrecker of homes. If talk, however, were the criterion of heroism, every man would deserve a place in the Hall of Fame."

At this very time, the man with the gray cap was everywhere spreading the news that the swindler had returned, and was even now on their side of the river.

Looking significantly at her half-concealed countenance, he remarked, "We are safely beyond the Hull city limits, so there is scarcely any likelihood of your being detected."

"It was not for me," spoke Flavia truly. "You do not realize your danger."

278 THE LAW OF THE HORNED HAND.

But she understood and drawing the veil from her face, revealed a dainty mouth, wreathed in the most enticing smile.

"Are you satisfied?" she asked, teasingly.

"Almost," he replied with deference and admiration.

Deftly, however, she turned the conversation into another channel. "You seem to have aged very much since last we met."

"Misfortune is a disastrous facial cosmetic," he answered. "To use Dick's expression, misfortunes never come singly but taking to themselves a wife, appear in wedded ferocity."

"Alas for domestic bliss, if it gives ground for such aphorisms," was her merry rejoinder.

Nearing the Chaudiere, they descended from the automobile and proceeded on foot to obtain a better view of the plunging cataract. Flavia seated herself on a jutting rock, while he, perhaps through weariness from excessive labors, threw himself at full length on the ground before her. Alive to the watery scene, whose wildness the sinking sun was every moment making more gorgeous, she had thrown back the veil from her head, and with her glowing dark eyes watched the progress of the illumination.

"Miss Chester?" he asked in low tones, "must our last words to-night again be 'adieu'?"

The question evidently displeased Flavia for she turned her head to one side. "It should have remained 'adieu' as we spoke that day in the park."

"Then you do regret this meeting?" he asked taking a more upright position.

"Your selection of words is too strong," she parried dreamily. "I made the promise at a time which precluded clear thinking, although in the meantime I never entertained a thought of breaking my word."

"Then why do you appear ill at ease?"

"Because—because," she stammered, "such a meeting both to you and to me is so utterly useless. For me, as I see more and more clearly, it is even unnatural."

"Then you still would be ——

"With my own," she finished nobly. "It is the call of duty."

"But why shape every action by the present?" he argued standing before her now. "Why make a resolution for all future time when a few months may bring an unexpected change in all these circumstances. The years may bring a calm in the storm when fondest dreams are again made possible."

Her eyes opened wide and knowingly at his last illusion. "Your own energy is so great, Mr. Gilbert that you will hardly suffer a blind future to shape any details for you," she hazarded also rising but moving a step from Max.

"The days are too acrid," he ruminated, now in evident melancholy. "Doree is gone, and my thousand friends in Ottawa and Hull are gone. I am alone; there is not even one to whom I can tell my success or my failures." His head sunk on his breast. "I scarcely know sometimes for whom I am making this last great effort, I am so dismally alone."

Flavia understood fully, and her heart went out in sympathy for the lonely man. "You are working

for the people, Mr. Gilbert, and some day this thought alone will be your reward and consolation"—now Flavia was floundering—"Then everything may come out alright in the end, for not even Max Gilbert can entirely shape the future. 'There is a divinity that shapes our ends.'"

"We trust so," he murmured to himself.

"I believe we're talking only along melancholy lines?" she smiled. "We'll revive ourselves by taking a closer view of the 'Chaudiere'."

He looked up at her meaningly then obeyed.

"Hear what a sweet nocturne the rippling waves are singing to the night," she spoke softly. "The crescent orb too has risen and nature's love-making has begun. The silver rays bend over the waters, and drinking in their sweet avowals, embrace them, kiss them, and send them on their way. There is no revenge among the elements: all is charity."

"They are at peace," he echoed dreamily, "And so should men be." Again he conjured up his dream-scene.

Max Gilbert thought that a new tenderness distinguished his companion's remarks as they rode the short distance back to the city.

Suddenly, he stopped his machine, "Would you mind delaying your return for a few minutes," he asked. "I'd like very much to see what progress they've made toward rebuilding Hull."

"I will not object," she replied benignantly, "if you are sure that no danger will result."

"No one will recognize us this evening," he ex-

plained carelessly. "At any rate, I only intend to drive around the outskirts."

The same pair of eyes under the gray cap were however in silent waiting for the possible return of the "Silver Fox".

In an incredibly short space of time, several hundred of the poorer class knew that Max Gilbert with a strange female companion was brazenly driving through their own city. Venomous slander worked with true grievances to arouse a feeling which boded ill to the object of their wrath. Ribald denizens of the saloon came forth to listen to the haranguer, and ever eager for acts in defiance of lawful order, linked themselves to the rapidly increasing mob. For this Indian imposter, and wrecker of homes, to flout them in their own homes, was a piece of dare-devil villainy that must be instantly avenged: if the law would not avenge their wrongs, they would constitute themselves executioners. Thousands of dollars of their hard-earned money had disappeared through the agency of this poor-blooded Indian, yet he was still at large. Had the poor always to bear wrongs in silence? Why had he deserted his post for the last half-year? "He is adding insult to injury," cried the man with the gray cap amid many gesticulations. "If we don't mete out justice to him, he'll escape scot-free." In answer, loud shouts of revenge mingled with curses upon the gambler's head.

All unconscious of the threatening danger Max Gilbert slowly drove his car through the streets made almost as light as day by the large orb above.

"Here live the people whose hard-earned money I

am trying to bring back to them," he said, pointing in a melancholy manner to the wooden structures, everywhere about them. "You have materially aided me this evening."

Several times as the car passed larger bodies of hurrying men, Flavia had shrunk back in her seat in order to escape possible detection.

"What are they all doing?" she asked apprehensively.

Just as they entered a narrow street, with low-roofed workmen's cottages on one side, and immense piles of lumber on the other, the answer to her query came in a very material way. At the end of a block appeared a dense and motley throng, forming an effective barrier against any one seeking egress in that direction.

"Here he comes," arose in raucous volume from a hundred angry throats, as so many hands were pointed to the occupant of the "Silver Fox".

"Down with the swindler! Revenge on the man who stole our money! Down with him!" were the cries which with many others now grated upon Max Gilbert's startled ear.

A light hand fell nervously upon his wrist. "You're lost, Max," she breathed in evident alarm. "It's you they wish to harm. Oh, I wish we could escape!" Then turning full upon him, she grasped his arm more strongly, "You can save us both, can't you?"

Though no harm might have befallen the woman in this crisis, yet beside the disagreeable notoriety, there were many personal and other reasons which forbade her trusting to the mercy of the mob. Max

Gilbert did not argue the matter but immediately resolved that "Chuck" must be saved, if there was safety for either.

The white car had been brought to a stop, while he gazed about for a possible outlet; no alley on either side was, however, large enough to admit the auto, while a crowd, almost as numerous as the first, had in the meantime taken possession of the other end of the block. Like a beast brought to bay, he looked toward the threatening and shouting rabble.

Then did the last remains of a certain Flying Arrow struggle for their entire reincarnation. Were not the efforts vain, which he was making for these ungrateful and reviling people? The fierce Dakotah of the olden days would never have tamely submitted to insult and mockery, especially when coupled with the present aggravating circumstances. His face became pale with passion; every vein stood out as if ready to burst; fire, almost living, flamed from the peering eyes.

Already about two score were advancing to his car when a whirring vibration again set it in motion.

Like a charge of the bloodthirsty Indians could his forty-horse power machine crash into the densely-packed throng. Perhaps a half-score might be killed, but who would dare keep a Dahoktah from life and liberty?

The temptation had risen to its height when his horrified companion faintly perceiving his possible intention, laid her restraining hand upon his arm. Perhaps the crowding events caused the illusion to his over-heated brain; at any rate he at once linked

that soft touch with his departed sister, while strangely he imagined a familiar voice was whispering in his ear.

"Max, you are no longer Flying Arrow: you are my brother."

In an instant, his strong will cast aside the temptation and the spirit of Flying Arrow vanished, never to appear again.

The car would, however, be in dangerous proximity to the enraged masses, before he could bring it to a stop. To avoid any fatality, he hastily closed off the current, and then, while the car was still moving, performed the most unexpected deed; with an exclamation in the Indian tongue, he rose to his full height and seizing Flavia Chester about the waist, leaped lightly with her to the ground.

Before him opened a pathway between piles of lumber; unhesitatingly, he chose this sole avenue of escape, and with his burden plunged into the labyrinth.

"Stop thief! Stop murderer!" were the discordant sounds which followed him into those dark and zig-zag alleys.

In a steady volume came the angry exclamations until the crowds divided themselves among the paths in the lumber yard. What Max Gilbert feared most, as he treaded his way between the lumber, was that the repeated cries of "Stop thief" might alarm people at the other side of the block and thus close off his safe exit.

"Clasp your arms around my neck," he said in

short gasps to Flavia. "It will enable me to run faster."

The crisis was too acute to admit of thought, and without a word she bravely obeyed a request that under different circumstances would have appeared most unmaidenly.

Steadily and strongly he pursued his way through the intricate paths. Several times already, as the approaching cries urged him to greater efforts, he had been thrown back by a cut from a jutting board. Then, snarling utterances in the Dakotah language would come from his clenched jaws, while he prepared again to press forward. Protecting Flavia Chester, as well as possible, with his own encircling arm, he could nevertheless not avoid every slight scratch as they pushed forward through the maze. Here, however, her true courage appeared, for she repressed the slightest exclamations of pain. The stray moonbeams which intermittantly illuminated his bleeding countenance showed her that he had sufficient troubles without having to sympathize with her own injuries.

He felt her sweet warm breath upon his face and vowed that no mob, ten times their number, could take her from him as long as there was a breath of life in his body. "Keep on," came bravely from her lips to nerve him to perseverance.

Everywhere about them in the passages could still be heard the cries of "Stop thief", which were to warn passers-by of the presence of a malefactor.

"Trust me," were the only words he spoke to her.

The Dakotah had been forever left behind, but not the courageous white man.

At last, after many detours, Max Gilbert with his precious burden emerged into the light.

Flavia presented a sorry plight. The auto veil had been torn into shreds, while the glossy hair was falling dishevelled over her shoulder.

"Come," he commanded, grasping her hand. "We'll run in this direction."

They had just attained a slight elevation when their ears caught the sound of a loud medley of voices. "We must run faster, Chuck," he said, using the name he loved best. "See several score are already coming towards us."

"Where are you leading me?" asked Flavia faintly, as once more she obeyed his words.

"We're too far above the bridge to make Ottawa," he answered disconnectedly as he ran along. "We must elude them for a time, then make a detour for the city. Don't be afraid," he said kindly. "They'll never capture us."

"I'm not afraid," she said, between steps, and truthfully too, for in this man's company she possessed an implicit confidence no harm could ever befall her.

They had not proceeded very far, when to their added discomfort, there arose on either side a perfect pargon of warning, advising, and encouraging exclamation.

"We're surrounded on three sides," she breathed, once more looking to Gilbert for rescue.

"It seems so," he answered desperately. "We must

run across the open for the river; there are generally a few boats along the shore. Come, it's our only chance."

Not more than a hundred yards of the clearing however was covered, before their detection by one of the pursuers, who in turn gave the alarm to the rest of the wolfish pack.

"They've seen us," he exclaimed in agitation. "Keep up courage: the river is only a short distance away."

The full moon, however, which fairly flooded the river's surface with its bright light, showed them a scene wherein no boat could be of any avail. Before them stretched an immense raft of massive logs which must very recently have been floated from the Ottawa camps. The sharp rays of the orb of night outlined every single log distinctly, showing also that the raft reached as far as the opposite bank.

"There's no boat here," remarked Flavia disconsolately, as she gazed into Gilbert's drawn face.

His eye hastily scanned the length of the shore, turning even to the bright heavens for possible help. Had his companion only the slightest knowledge of log running, there would still remain a slight chance of escape.

Suddenly, as the shouting crowds were within a hundred feet of them, a thought came upon him, which appalled even the conceiver with its utter daring. Matters had reached such a desperate crisis that the seemingly impossible must at last be attempted.

"Did you ever run logs?" he panted.

"I used to when I was a little girl."

"Then trust me, Chuck," he said, using that endeared name once more, as he gazed in anguish upon her. "Do not make the slightest resistance to my plan, and we'll still escape their clutches."

"I'll trust you, Max," she answered softly, likewise making use of his Christian name to show her complete confidence and resignation.

Far in the distant camping days had this riverman performed deeds at which even the oldest members gasped in wonderment. Now had come the time when all his former experience, and more, would be put to the most crucial test.

Without a word, he seized Flavia in his strong arms, pressed her to his breast a moment, perhaps in affection, then leaped upon the nearest floating log. Realizing only then what his intentions were, she grasped him about the neck, then closing her eyes prayed to heaven for the successful outcome of the desperate venture.

Swiftly as a panther did the riverman leap with his burden from log to log, for the slightest delay would sink the over-weighted timbers, and project them both into the river. Thanks to the generous moonlight, he was enabled to pick his logs with ordinary security.

Once he let down his burden and strongly assisted her to run the logs beside him. Then feeling her weakening, he again took her up in his arms and resumed his superhuman feat.

A hundred logs were passed in this wonderful manner, when his pursuers arrived at the water's edge; some were for pursuing the fugitives, but one

with more chivalry than the remainder, held out a restraining hand.

"My God!" he exclaimed in French, "let them go: it's too admirable an attempt to frustrate; if that man ever reaches shore he deserves to escape."

They had indeed cause for exclamation. To essay the crossing of that treacherous raft, bearing a human burden was a task which the trained lumberman, Max Gilbert, would alone attempt. None of the astounded onlookers had ever realized what a terrible strength there was in the iron arms of the supposed Indian, until they came to witness this thrice heroic attempt on the moon-lit river.

"He hasn't drowned yet," muttered one in terrible awe. "Heavens above!" cried another. "See what he's doing now."

A few feet ahead, Max Gilbert saw a narrow channel dividing the raft. Then did the astonished rabble behold the silhouetted form of a giant holding a woman far over his head, make a mighty leap across the water to alight safely upon the log of his aim. The Indian element was guiding his sharp search of suitable logs; the trained strength of the lumber jack was bearing him up in the terrible test of endurance. Already, as he swiftly covered log after log, did his tense muscles begin to tingle with the pain of over-exertion. But the trusting woman in his arms must be preserved from insult, and he never desisted in his mighty race.

Never gazing about, he again let down his fair companion to run beside him. Again she weakened, and again he took her in his arms.

Occasionally as a greater difficulty presented itself, a low utterance in the Indian tongue, escaped from his lips. He had by this time, however, become so exhausted that he was forced to turn his course towards the boom, where he could at least secure surer footing.

Once as he continued in that direction he struck a light log and for the moment it seemed as if both would be projected in the water; but again with a mighty rally, he sprang upward to safely reach a stouter hemlock.

The wonderful act of that moonlit night was almost completed. He had arrived at the boom, where, able to proceed more slowly and safely, he finally came to the opposite bank and to the end of his venture.

The exciting events of the night had crowded together too rapidly for Flavia. Her face was haggard; and trembling in every limb she fell fainting into Max Gilbert's arms.

"You're weak, Chuck," he whispered sympathetically. Then he took her to the river where, wetting some large leaves, he began to bathe her forehead and wrists.

A wonderful feeling coursed through Max Gilbert's veins. In his arms lay the prettiest creature of his dreams. She was his because he had saved her: what did her own sentiments matter, for to-night his own soul was suffocating with affection. For a moment he forgot the wet leaves on her forehead: yes, his trembling hands must some day grasp this frail lovely bit of humanity and draw it to himself. The battle had been too protracted and acrimonious.

He gazed upon her white countenance and beheld two large eyes gazing wonderingly at him.

Perhaps she half understood his sentiments for slowly the dainty mouth was turned aside until it was hidden in his arms.

"I am better now," whispered Flavia, attempting to rise. "I must go home; it is only about three blocks from here."

"May I take your arm?" he asked, as the absence of necessity once more demanded the observance of urbanity.

"You may," she smiled faintly, thinking no doubt of the recent more vehement methods of locomotion. Her dead relaxation upon his supporting arm proved how very needful was his present assistance.

Perhaps it was only imagination, but several times in the course of their walk, he thought her cheek had rested for the briefest moment against his shoulder.

Luckily for them, they did not meet any other pedestrians before they arrived at the gray stone mansion.

Flavia sank wearily upon the veranda steps. "What are you going to do now?" she asked, turning the tender light of her eyes upon Max.

"I'll leave that to your discretion," he answered resolutely.

"Since I cannot escape detection with my present bedraggled appearance, there is no necessity of your remaining without," she answered. "Father is in Three Rivers this week but even his presence could not matter much," she concluded bravely.

292 THE LAW OF THE HORNED HAND.

The events of the evening had been too momentous to admit of further converse between them.

After a few minutes, with a pressure of the hand he loved so well and a meaning "Good-night," Max Gilbert departed.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

"The times are wild, contention like a horse
Full of high feeling madly hath broke loose
And bears all before him."—*Henry IV.*

Why this rampant excitement in the cities of Hull and Ottawa? From early morn a gesticulating, heterogeneous mob of wild eyed men and women have elbowed one another in the avenues, in the streets and by-ways, as guided by some apparently mysterious, but withal grim purpose, they seemed vomited into the already seething maelstrom of motley beings that fill the frozen air with the chaos of harangues, the vulgar grating oath and coarse witticism, all jumbled into one ominous mutter like the warning rumble of the elements when nature convulsed and shaken finds her palsied self tattered by the storm.

To-day Max Gilbert was to meet his doom. The lusty, eager throng now hailed his name in execration, they fumbled, they cursed, conspired, all united in their angry threats and coarser maledictions. This imposter, Indian, renegade of the woods, this swindling, smooth-tongued offspring of nowhere, who had stolen their substance, the bread of their tables, the portion of their widows and little ones—must go. Fink's work had been done well. For months the arch conspirator egged on by Chester had worked upon the unsuspecting multitude, which proverbial in its fickle wavering and for the time being tuned to his doctrine,

now raised its clutched and horned hands in loud-mouthed vengeance that filled the cold grey winter morning with pulsant discord.

It was the day of the 'Western World's' annual meeting. To this time had the masterful Gilbert turned his feverish efforts of the past year, as traveling again and again among the seven hundred agents, he hoped to pile up such a stupendous amount of new business as would relieve him of the immense half million dollar indebtedness, reimburse the thousands of poor stockholders, and greatest of all, give the 'Western World' the most enviable position as the strongest insurance company in the Dominion of Canada.

Already, an hour before the meeting, the large hall rented for the purpose was filled to overflowing with one thousand low-muttering determined investors of the supposedly bankrupt company.

Sharp at schedule time, the maligned manager walked through the aisle to take his seat on a platform at the further end. According to pre-arrangement he was not immediately greeted by the outburst of their pent-up rage, although the glowering faces and a few irrepressible hisses gave evidence that it would not be long held in leash. The faint look of concern on Max Gilbert's face as he bravely passed the unruly element was the only sign that he realized his precarious position; that fear was not more evident in the man was due to a telegram received two hours before.

Thompson as president of the 'Western World' formally opened the session. Tolerated as the uncon-

scious tool in more skilful hands, he was allowed to proceed without interruption. To gain time for some hidden purpose he kept the floor longer than usual and conducted part of the business which pertained to his confrere.

This means, whatever may have been its intent, could not be employed forever and as a consequence the first official, Max Gilbert, finally arose to his feet.

Scarcely however had he moved when such an infernal shouting burst forth as if the demons of Hades had suddenly been robbed of half their prey. From one end of the hall to the other, man vied with man to make himself heard above the bedlam. Hundreds stamped their feet; hundreds had arisen to wave their arms frantically at the object of their wrath. The pent-up fury of months and months of ill-borne penury, which had long ago ceased to expect legal vindication, now rose to its own voicing. Impostor! Swindler! Indian! Gambler! Wrecker of homes! Renegade! Liar! Robber! and many more names too vile to place on these pages were hurled at the erect figure on the platform.

Pale as the snow hanging over the windows, stood Max Gilbert. Given time he could clear himself of suspicion, but who had expected such a torrent of abuse! His hand remained in air to command silence but just as well might he have tried to stem the avalanche which is projected from the mountain top.

Without cessation came the imperative cry, "Resign, Resign! We don't want you any more! You're an Indian renegade! The company is ruined! Resign, Resign!" Several times already had he tried

to speak, but according to design his voice was drowned in the rabid volume pouring without intermission from one thousand raucous throats. The eye which had ruled scores of rough lumber jacks in the back woods flashed in vain; the strong personality that had won him respect in the commercial world from ocean to ocean and even in faraway England was robbed of its power.

Slowly turning his drawn face about to the eight directors he mutely appealed to them for aid in quelling the disturbance; he must cast his last die, but even for the faint hope of its successful issue, absolute and utter silence was required.

The eight men arose to hold up their hands for the cessation of the deafening noise. Perhaps it was because of their official position, perhaps the noisy element took it as a sign of surrender, for slowly the cries decreased in vehemence, then subsided altogether. Max Gilbert's future depended on that momentary truce. He had the proofs—he must make them plain; more proofs were on the way—he must gain time. These magnanimous efforts of the past year must not be in vain.

He took a step forward and began in the deep, dignified tones so natural to his strong character.

"A year and three months ago," he spoke strongly, "witnessed a conflagration which destroyed a most thriving city, apparently bankrupted a progressive insurance company, and blackened with its smoke the character of him who stood at its helm."

Someone attempted a renewal of the clamor but

this time the steely eye and restraining hand of the manager had their effect.

He continued in the same methodical manner, "The act by which your half a million dollars was wiped out of existence was mine and mine alone. I seek no excuse for the sin, for before God it is already judged according to strictest justice. Let me state however, that as far as the investors were concerned, my sole desire of enriching them too quickly impelled me to the hazard. Had fortune smiled upon my throw, you would now shower your blessings upon me; because fortune was not as kind as I, you make me the recipient of your curses."

A pause was made to let this thought become deeply impressed upon the impatient hearers.

"Immediately after that fire a report was set afoot which has in these intervening months only increased in violence and," he added significantly, "perhaps also in misrepresentations. Men said and men believed that the Western World Fire Insurance Company had been stricken to earth, been bankrupted beyond all hope of redemption; through the super-confidence of one official, a half million dollars had been ruthlessly wasted and the insolvent company become too crippled to repay its thousands of shareholders one cent of their hard-earned money. You have therefore assembled here to-day to demand an account from the chief steward, and without any equivocation on my part to mete out the punishment which the misappropriation of so vast a sum demands."

The magnetism of this man had begun to cast its

spell over the sullen multitude. There was no attempt to discolor the facts, but every detail had been brought out with as vivid a truth as even their heated imagination had pictured it. But what after all could be the reason of this exposition of disagreeable truths when still more grievous accusations lay in waiting; why this useless surrender to a mercy that did not exist?

A portentous resonance was permeating Max Gilbert's words as he approached the climax which should save him from the wrath of these people.

"To revive such a tottering company would in your eyes be an impossible task; to redeem the half million dollars, to give those thousands of shares their par value once more, would be estimated a still greater impossibility. Should these however come into the realm of fact; were some man suddenly to come forth with the announcement, 'I have saved your company; I have saved your million', your own sense of gratitude would spring forth in fullest measure to this saviour. To have performed such a wonderful task with very little personal emolument would at once place that man, whatever slanders, calumnies and villifying reports may have said, above suspicion; the noble instincts of your hearts must then cry out 'It cannot be true; there is some mistake; the man who has worked so generously for our benefit cannot be guilty of this foul crime'."

The climax was at hand. The speaker's strong vibrant voice reached to every corner of the vast hall.

"Gentlemen," he declared with arms outstretched, "I, Max Gilbert, have saved your company; I, Max

Gilbert, have redeemed the one-half million dollars so that at this present moment every one of the fifty thousand shares again has its par value.

"See here," he cried, turning to the vast pile of new policies which Dick had with sudden dramatic effect produced on the table. "Here is the proof. While you slandered my good name, said I had taken to ignominious flight, I traveled to the distant shores of England on your behalf, secured a guarantee for our policies, and coming back, silently established agencies of the 'Western World' from the Atlantic ocean to the Pacific. To-day seven hundred agents in every province of the Dominion are sending in thousands of policies to the company which you supposed bankrupt. Here before you lies the result of their efforts up to the present, in a mountain of new business which has paid off our indebtedness, and forever placed us in security against the vicissitudes of the future. Gentlemen," he declared with an air of victory, "I will anticipate your discovery by the declaration that the Western World Fire Insurance Company has outstripped all rivals and is to-day the strongest company in the whole Dominion of Canada."

There was a stillness of death in the vast chamber when this narration of wonderful exploits attained its height; two thousand non-plussed men had just listened to a story so strange as might be expected only on the pages of a sensational novel.

Their one-half million dollars had come back from non-existence; poverty was alleviated; individual bankruptcy averted, and ever sign given of renewed dividends and bank accounts. Many would have

shouted enthusiastically at the welcome news had diabolical slander not so effectually prejudiced them to regard with suspicion this man's every action and utterance.

Chagrin and disgust had taken possession of two hearts in that assembly. Chester and Fink had come for the sole purpose of gloating over their rival's downfall. Now however came the disagreeable intelligence that he had cleverly outwitted them and in the matter of competition was far beyond their reach. Nevertheless one question, and for their enemy's welfare perhaps the most threatening, still remained unanswered.

While several came forward from the audience to be convinced of the genuineness of this monster pile of redeeming policies, Max Gilbert entered upon the refutation of their more damaging accusations. He must immediately utilize the perplexed silence his wonderful announcement had created.

"All these facts, gentlemen," he proceeded, "refute part at least of your slanders. This redemption of your company proves there never was any intention of swindling you; that I was not intentionally a wrecker of homes; that I did not like a coward seek safety in flight." Every letter of the next sentence was pronounced distinctly. "If half of your supposedly firm convictions were wrong, is it not very possible that you are laboring under error also with the other half? My former life had indeed been kept in the dark because of its too great adaptability to misrepresentations."

We will pass over this part hurriedly, stating only that the harassed manager gave a very clear and suc-

cinct account of his birth and the years which intervened to the present. He continued, "Not that you think I would repudiate Indian birth were it really the truth; what God was not ashamed to give, of that also the receiver has no reason to be ashamed. I have lived with this people, have suffered with them, have fled with them before the murderous hand of the pale-faces and know they are a race 'more sinned against than sinning'. The proof however of my legitimate birth of white parents which was to be shown to you this very day has to my discomfiture not yet arrived. Six weeks ago I wrote to a Winnipeg lawyer instructing him to secure the Bible from Silver Fox, and to follow it up with affidavits that the birth notice was really the genuine handwriting of my white father. The lawyer, Mr. Dougan, was made to understand fully the pressing necessity of the matter before him. Once the messengers to the chief were stopped several days by terrific falls of snow, then they had abandoned the quest only to resume it again, and finally Silver Fox himself is said to be on the way with the Bible and all necessary legal documents." He turned a more appealing eye upon the thousand doubting faces. "I know that you are prejudiced against my every remark, but in the face of the great work just completed in your behalf, I ask for just a little patience to await these required proofs. They will come, I know; Silver Fox will not fail me. The last telegram states that he will arrive on a train ten minutes past due now. Wait; he'll come."

The requested truce appeared on the point of being granted. There was a shifting of positions with mur-

mured consultations, but the ominous demands for resignation did not again come forth. Complacency at their own resuscitated fortunes for the moment dulled their initiative, although the improbable story just heard most certainly surpassed their credulity. During this vacillation between gratitude and its opposed virtue, two men held a whispered conversation. Then arose Fink, the tool, the arch contriver, the originator of the calumny, to fan their fluttering suspicions once more to the glaring heat of vengeance.

"The whole story is a fabrication, a lie of the deepest dye," shouted Fink at the top of his voice. "If this man did save your company it was not through disinterested motives, but the selfish hope that he would once more gain the lucrative position of its first official. He denies his Indian birth, but I declare positively that he is perpetrating the biggest imposture ever witnessed in the Dominion of Canada." With a smack his fist came into the palm of his hand to emphasize the remark. "I have written to Portage la Prairie, the supposed place of his birth, but not even the oldest inhabitant has ever heard of a Gilbert."

"That was because my parents left la Prairie over fifteen years ago," contradicted Max Gilbert above the rising din. "Had you written to their next place of residence, you would have secured the verification of my story."

"Subterfuge!" sarcastically cried Fink, while several applauded his effort. "Isn't that just as tricky an answer as the rest of his story? The man has continually hinted at facts more than melodramatic, but

when we ask him for proofs, he says, 'Wait, wait!' He has had a whole year's time to prove our allegations false, but nothing has been done. Give him this ten minutes and he'll ask for a month. No, no Bible or affidavits will ever arrive. The man was ousted from the commercial world and here was the one place where he could recover a good paying position; for his own selfish interests has he overcome the obstacles, not for your sakes. Truth need never fear the light. Why then this former secrecy, this half an admission of a life with the dirty redskins? Why this appeal for clemency? I know the reason; he hopes you will be so intoxicated by your own reversal of fortune that you will eventually forget his own imposture. He's an Indian, and he's something worse," concluded the chagrined wretch in snarling tones.

At this very moment many blocks away, a blind old Indian dog sent up long drawn howls to the skies, then placed his nose to a certain trail.

But the falsifier's intention was gained. Once more the large hall became filled with deafening anathemas against the hapless manager. Their own gratitude was forgotten in the face of that tantalizing, maddening idea of having been made the sport of an Indian impostor. This time there would be no quelling the disturbance: further appeal was impossible, for the sharp, incessant cries of "Resign, Resign!" portended what could be the sole outcome.

The faithful Dick had relapsed into a chair, where with hands plunged desperately into his pockets, he thought grimly of the calamitous event about to happen; the uneasy directors shuffled their feet and

glanced nervously at their manager as still standing he gazed unflinchingly upon this storm of raucous anger.

The contentious wave of hisses and cries would not ~~cease~~ their forboding clamor. The last hope had fled.

Suddenly an aged dog appeared at the rear door where, sinking on his haunches, he turned his nose to the ceiling with such a long drawn howl of exultation as pierced even the uproarious shouting of the thousand.

Struck by the wierdness of the act, the vast crowd relapsed into utter, pensive silence.

Then did Fire Sticks, for it was none other, run back a few feet to usher in the strangest sight of all. The dog had once more placed his nose to a certain scent, but in his wake now came the figure of an Indian, stalking by them majestically as if to defy the burden of his hundred years. The long flowing hair was white as snow; the bronze countenance from which gleamed his piercing black eyes, marked with the scars and wrinkles of battle and time. Blind old Fire Sticks had arrived on the platform to leap upon his master with an almost unearthly yelp of delight.

The heavy buffalo robe was flung from the dusky stranger and, as his arms went out in greeting, two words were distinctly heard in every corner of the spacious chamber.

"Flying Arrow!"

"Silver Fox!"

The silence became intense as the vast assembly realized that at the most opportune and critical moment had appeared the only man who could save

Max Gilbert. The light of triumph was in the manager's eyes as, holding the aged chief at arm's length, he welcomed him in his own Dakota language.

Looking in astonishment upon the picturesque figure in buckskin, not one in the assembly had yet made an audible exclamation. They received their first intelligence of the dramatic incident when the old chieftain himself in broken English, probably for the sake of the listening palefaces, explained to Max how he had arrived at this height of opportuneness.

"Silver Fox, he know time of big pow-pow. The paleface in Winnepeg tell me all. I get late. I ask where is your home. I see Fire Sticks with man. He be blind, but he put his nose on trail and he lead me to Flying Arrow. Fire Sticks be one good dog," he explained, pointing to the canine resting at their feet.

Something in the dog's position however, drew their closer attention. Max bent down to arouse the faithful beast, but quickly stood up again to gaze meaningly into the chieftain's eyes. Fire Sticks would answer his master's voice no more; the last great act of defense, overtaxing his crippled strength, had cost the dumb old servitor his life.

"Fire Sticks has been thrown into the water to appease the storm," remarked the chief alluding to a common Dakota tradition, while he gazed angrily over the sea of human faces.

By the consequent act of Silver Fox, those thousand men saw the refutation of every slander, the vanishment of their last suspicion. From under his buckskin coat he drew a worn old Bible and open-

ing it at the middle page, silently pointed to the boldly written notice of Max Gilbert's white birth.

This proof would have been sufficient, for no Indian, much less this grizzled chief with the stern countenance, would make a winter journey of eighteen hundred miles to support a falsehood. Closing the book, he once more reached into his inner pocket and drew forth this time the lawyer's affidavits which vouched for the genuineness of that birth notice. All calumny saw its destruction; Max Gilbert was saved.

Silver Fox however was not yet finished with these maligners of his quondam son. With the deepest scorn written on his angular countenance, he now turned his speech to the concourse before him.

"You are the palefaces who want to teach the Indian," began the tribal orator in slow hissing tones. Difficulty with the language prevented his speaking more rapidly. "The Indian has not the forked tongue like you have. Sometimes one brave, or two braves, or three braves speak with a forked tongue, but the white man in Winnepeg tell me there are two big villages of palefaces saying things not true against Flying Arrow. He is the same blood as you, and you are like wolves, that tear to pieces one of their own." The last words he hissed forth, "You would not take Flying Arrow because you thought he was an Indian. I would rather be a Dakotah Indian than be the greatest white man in this land."

Then turning away in proud disgust, the haughty centenarian began to address Max Gilbert.

"I have come over the lakes of ice, the high mountains and the prairies full of snow to see Flying

Arrow once more. Since you went away, many squaws and old men have crossed the river over the snake's back; the braves are old men and the papooses are now braves; they all want you. The moon will not give them sleep till they again see Flying Arrow. All day the braves stand on the shore looking for the new chief. Silver Fox is heavy with a hundred winters; he is no more good for chief. I come a long trail to ask Flying Arrow to take my place as chief of the Dakotahs. Come," he concluded with magnetic mien, "your own do not love you; we will love you."

Already had a low murmur of dissent began to pervade the hall, as that crude appeal rose to its height of picturesqueness. Were they fearing their manager would consent?

Max Gilbert knew how great must be the longing among the distant Dakotahs if they sent their aged chief eighteen hundred miles to carry this message. Nay, more, they could never had done so, had chief and people not been absolutely sure of their wishes being immediately granted. He disliked therefore to disabuse the kind chief of his illusions. Only after a long delay, could he summon the courage for this involuntary harsh act.

Again with a gaze of deepest hatred, Silver Fox swept the hall. Again he turned with pleading hands to one he loved to call his son.

"Come, Flying Arrow," he begged earnestly. "Your own brothers have not loved you; my Indian children will love you. Come, we'll fish together; we'll hunt the deer once more. Come, you'll be chief

and my people will again become happy and powerful."

Max Gilbert's answer was low, but nevertheless plainly audible to the thousand strained listeners.

"Tell the warriors, tell your people," answered Max, unconsciously following the same manner of speech, "tell the Dakotahs that Flying Arrow loves them. Tell them that Flying Arrow stands on the shore all day and with his hand over his eyes looks sadly across the water at the Dakotah wigwams, and his heart is heavy. Say he cannot run away from his own, for his own will also some day love him. No, Silver Fox, my heart is bleeding for the Dakotahs; it is filled with thanks for them. But," he concluded, waving his hand over the assembly, "these are the people for whom I have fought so long, and these are the people with whom I will stay."

The thrilling magnanimous response aroused every noble instinct in the thousand listeners. A low murmuring followed it, then suddenly there arose such a triumphal shout for Max Gilbert as was perhaps never before heard in that city. Again and again did the loud huzzahs shake the very walls of that building. "Long live Gilbert!" "He is white, and white to the core!" were only two of the many cries which pierced the exulting clamor. Hats were thrown in the air, men jumped to their feet, many even running to the platform to congratulate the manager on the successful outcome of so long a battle.

That tremendous outburst presaged forever an unshakeable confidence in this man, a friendship which

would never again forsake him, a love which would never again be disturbed.

Once more two cities would place Max Gilbert on the pedestal of honor from which rampant falsehood had so undeservedly hurled him. The storm of riotous contention would yield to a reflective calm, prophetic of still greater success and renown. Once more could the manager emerge from obscurity, and placing himself at the head of the victorious battalion of seven hundred agents, do still mightier battle for his people and the "Western World." Territories closed against him over a year would again open their gates, while it was certain that on his first entry into Hull, ten thousand friends would return to his standard and lay all their business at his feet.

Dick also had his part in the great drama of the afternoon for, while dozens of friends were ascending the platform, he disobeyed his superior's command by explaining how Max Gilbert had turned all his bonds into money and even gone so far as to mortgage his pretty home in order to secure sufficient money to pay for the English company's guarantee. Another wave of applause came towards the victorious manager at this intelligence, as unanimously they empowered the directors to reimburse him from the company's treasury for his vast outlay. This man's past labors were unparalleled in the history of insurance; his present position was unique, impregnable, supreme.

The battle was done. The other details of business that followed we need not explain here. Suffice it to say that a meeting which opened with thunder clouds

closed with a sunlight that meant continued prosperity and good feeling.

Every effort was made by Max Gilbert and by those who had witnessed the dramatic appearance, to detain the old Indian chief for a long stay, but already after the meeting he informed them that to-morrow's sun would witness his return to his children. With the stoicism true to his race, he had accepted Flying Arrow's refusal as final. Naturally prejudiced against the whites and burdened with the thought of an unaccomplished mission, he could tarry no longer away from his own. Many years yet might his children shade their eyes across the water for the appearance of their saviour—he would never gladden their vision.

During the evening's conversation, Silver Fox informed Max of fresh encroachments of palefaces which has caused the Dakotahs to move their village still further to the northeast. This circumstance fully explained the inability of the guide to locate the chief, and therefore also, the latter's late arrival with the proofs.

To reward the aged chieftain, Max could do no better than reimburse him for the expenses of the long trip and to ship a car load of provisions and apparel with him to his destitute tribe. We may anticipate somewhat by noting that in the course of the following year Max and his friends initiated a legal procedure which benefitted these aborigines even more materially.

"I will not live with the palefaces," explained Silver Fox next morning beside the train. "It would

be like always winter. Flying Arrow was good to ask me to live with him, but I must live in the air like my fathers lived. Flying Arrow will be a great chief amongst his own."

"By your help has it been done, Silver Fox," answered Max sadly. "I promise you that I'll visit your village before another winter."

"Flying Arrow speaks the truth," concluded the unhappy chief. "My children will wait for he will come."

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO.

THE NEW YEAR.

The anathemas which Silver Fox had heaped upon the head of Adrian Chester were fierce as a Dakotah could make them. With each word of the rehearsal of wrongs as given to him by Max the evening after the meeting, his vengeful soul burned the more for vengeance upon the arch-contriver. That very night would the fiery chief have dwelt summary justice to the manager of the Northern, had not the more prudent paleface at his side restrained him.

"Then Silver Fox will return to his own again," sullenly conceded the picturesque old warrior, "but Flying Arrow will not forget to send the thunder and the lightning of his anger upon this false paleface."

"Flying Arrow will not forget," came strongly from the Dakotah pupil. "It is the last battle; then Flying Arrow can return to his wigwam to hunt and fish in peace once more."

"When will you see the paleface?"

"To-morrow night."

"Silver Fox will go away with the stars in the morning," concluded the sachem, his strong face again shaded by sadness as he thought of his own. "But when you come to Lake Little Bear, you must tell me you have been a true Dakotah," he concluded, trembling with hate.

"I will," was the brief but strong response.

Then as the time drew near, it seemed that the very soul of Max Gilbert was being consumed with anticipation of his drastic revenge. Ah, he remembered how Chester had come to the eventful meeting for his "pound of flesh": a Dakotah would be even more vindictive. In every battle thus far he had pitted his strength against terrific odds and had always been victorious; now was come the last but fiercest battle of them all. A family's ruin, a father's disgrace calling like spectres from the past, would be heard; his own injuries be returned a hundred fold. To-morrow night, the night of nights—would it ever come?

Then the steely look of determination which for so long had transfixed the zealous manager's countenance, gave way slightly to a complacent smile of anticipated victory.

"The long battle is at an end," remarked Max. "In a month we'll be able to return to the more peaceful days of old. Insurance affairs will be forgotten for a time when you and I go in search of pleasure."

"You're a perfect dreamer," observed Dick, who had just entered to offer his assistance. "Have you resolved in what part of the world you'll seek that amusement?"

"I'll visit Lake Winnepegosis. Think of it, Dick," he exclaimed with unchallenged gladness, "how pleasant it will be to see old Silver Fox and his whole band gather about you once more! What an interesting sight again to see their papooses, their tepees, their dances!"

"Grand! Grand!" assented the agent dryly. "If I go along, I'll be made Prince sure." Then humor-

ously, "Imagine if you had then always to address me by such a fatiguing title as Prince Wagadugooilaks—last three syllables to be repeated eight times!"

The two friends toiled on until six o'clock in the evening. Dick accepted the invitation to remain for dinner but departed immediately afterwards without even taking time to smoke a cigar with his chief. He noticed how as the great hour approached, a dreamy mood overcame Max Gilbert and that it would be better to leave him alone with his thoughts.

Alone therefore the conquering manager returned to the parlor, and seating himself in a capacious chair, indulged in almost the first relaxation after the trying work of the past year. It was the warrior's rest before the last battle. The olive green glow of the chandelier, the mural paintings which gazed upon him with pastoral placidity, the happy profusion of the knick-knacks, the idea of comfort inseparable from those deeply cushioned rockers—all were as one idea bearing upon his mind, and yielding to their silent lethargy, the strong but much harassed man dreamed.

Yes, peace stood with its whitened wings above the horizon. For one brief second a certain patrician face beamed appealingly from out the balmy haze; but no, by her own words she could never be anything to him, and the stoic banished its plea as being too discordant with his present satisfied mood.

The scene of calm has changed—the time, two hours afterwards—within the shadows of the Chester verandah stands a man, stern, resolute.

In response to the bell a young woman of surpass-

ing beauty opens the door. As the man beholds her stately figure dressed in old rose, even to the slippers on her feet, he could again have murmured "fresher than a rose, fresher than a rose". Passingly only did he guess the meaning of her exquisite gown for this was the night of the New Year's Ball; evidently she was preparing to leave for the scene of the festivities.

"Max Gilbert!" she exclaimed with intense surprise. "You here? On New Year's eve? Whom do you wish to see?"

"Adrian Chester," was the curt response, while he boldly pushed his way into the hall.

Lost for thought, she unconsciously asked "Why?"

"I wish to see him on business," he replied laconically.

There was something so suppressed in the man's tone, so direful in his look that Flavia Chester conceived a faint suspicion of a diabolical climax which was that very night to be carried out against her stepfather. The thought developed steadily in her mind until she remembered her own encounter with Dick Kildare in the office to the left. Great as had been Max Gilbert's victory over her father within the last two days, she knew also he had the means to make defeat on the part of the other still more drastic. Yes, the illegal act had not yet been touched upon, and here was a Dakotah who would stop at nothing but the most complete revenge. Would this explain Max Gilbert's presence here to-night? What should she do?

The nocturnal visitor chafed visibly under the delay, for this was the pleading face of his dreams

hallowed now in such loveliness as he had never in his fondest imaginings predicated of her. With the delicate blossom on her bosom and the tiara of diamonds in her hair, she might exert an influence too chastening for his vengeful resolution.

"Ah—won't you come into the parlor?" she stammered dazedly, making room for him to pass.

"Will you be seated?" she faltered with the same vacant stare.

Max Gilbert was surprised that without obeying his request to see her father she herself took a seat opposite to him. Evidently Flavia Chester was laboring under perplexing emotions, for once she gazed nervously at the portiered door to her rear, then pensively covered her face with her hands.

"Where is your father?" persisted the man coldly.

"He is upstairs." Then with sudden resolution as she leaned forward eagerly, "Will you grant me a moment's conversation before I summon Mr. Chester?"

"I will." Was not her beauty irresistible even to one in his state of mind?

Another man upstairs had heard the exclamation at the door, "Max Gilbert", and it was a name he had reason to fear. What could his greatest enemy want of him at this hour of the night? Intuitively he understood that no good was intended for him: Max Gilbert had a long score to settle; Max Gilbert was now riding on the crest of victory; Max Gilbert was a relentless foe. Surely the splendid victory of yesterday was enough; or, was the personal combat withheld until the last for the purpose of a still more withering climax.

Adrian Chester became so perturbed that he did not know whether to seek safety in flight, or to meet his enemy personally and trust to fortune for the result. Without knowing the reason of his act, he began slowly and stealthily to descend the stairs. A strange love he had for his daughter and enough of chivalry to dislike to leave her alone with his foe, were the motive causes. Since the direction of his steps at first led him away from the two in the parlor, he did not again come within hearing of their voices until they were well on in the conversation still to be recorded.

It was Max Gilbert's part to let the young woman before him open the topic.

"Have you come here for purposes of revenge upon my father?" she began with a brave effort.

Gilbert squirmed in his seat for no matter how he was deluding himself as to her sentiments, he thought it too premature to acquaint her with his direful plot. He wondered therefore how he could equivocate or lead her into a different channel of conversation. She was however holding his gaze so insistently that he must make some dubious reply.

"The matter is connected with our protracted combat," he conceded with forced truthfulness, as he cast an inquiring look upon her.

She was not yet satisfied. "Then your recent victory was not complete?" hazarded Flavia with tense interest.

"No," was the grim response, "as Adrian Chester's also would not have been complete were he the victor, and were something still more severe possible."

"You have outwitted him," she cried. "You have shown your superiority in every department of insurance activity; you have far surpassed your greatest competitor, the 'Northern'." She was too deeply interested longer to play at cross-purposes; the truth must come at once. "Then do you wish to expel him from his company?" breathed Flavia, looking immovable. "Will you not rest content until you have disgraced him before the whole city? Is that your purpose?"

Why should he be deterred from his revenge by any interest of Flavia Chester? Had she not made the days even drearier when as they came to the "Fork in the waters" she had bidden him "adieu" forever?

Max Gilbert was nettled at her insistence. He would end the suspense by a brief but truthful declaration of his intentions, then demand immediately to see his enemy. "Yes, Miss Chester," he nodded coldly, rising from his chair. "It is my intention to disgrace one who has injured me and mine severely; I do intend to have your father expelled from the 'Northern'."

Adrian Chester was quietly approaching the portiered door when he heard the above answer. The words "expel" and "disgrace" sent such a tremor of fear through him that pale and weak he sank on a chair at his side.

Flavia Chester straitened with fear, arose and laid a restraining hand upon the manager of the "Western World". "Stay but for another moment," she begged nervously. "I know your whole plan."

Max Gilbert, still standing, looked sharply at the speaker. "Yes," he pondered, forcing her again to lead the conversation.

It required a heroic effort for Flavia Chester to come forth with her ensuing statements, all of which the determined manager never realized.

"I know Adrian Chester has incriminated himself with a false report," she pursued with a sentiment probably of disdain at the disagreeable details. "I know he tampered with the books in order to deceive the auditors; cancellations remained on the register; re-insurance was counted as a second policy; losses were left over until the following year; the figures of 'paid-up capital' were falsely increased; and, among many other things he himself made an addition of fifty thousand dollars to the income which he withdrew again the day after the audit." Once more Flavia overcame feminine weakness as she came to the feared conclusions; her face was drawn and her words could not rise above a whisper. "No you desire to gloat over Adrian Chester while you confront him with this evidence; next you will institute legal proceedings against him and his company, force him from his position in disgrace, and perhaps cause the 'Northern' to lose its charter."

Beads of perspiration stood upon the brow of the listener in the next room: at last he was at the mercy of his greatest enemy. Every word had been like an arrow to send renewed fear through his quaking soul. No matter what he might do now, his cause was lost irretrievably; he was helpless.

Dimly Max Gilbert foresaw the possible trend of

a longer conversation, and several times his wandering glances informed her that he would prefer to speak to the one for whom he had inquired.

"It's fate," he muttered aggressively. "Adrian Chester has incurred the anger of heaven and I am the instrument of justice."

Her countenance was pallid as a face of classic marble, as she leaned forward with her fervent request. "I ask you to give up this vengeful plan," exclaimed the noble girl while her fingers unclasped in mute appeal. "Cannot you give it up, Mr. Gilbert; won't you?" she concluded with passionate fervor.

"Ask me anything else," he replied in dismay as his hand went out before him. "I cannot: I cannot. It has been resolved too often and too strongly."

The splendid creature in ball costume arose and stood before him.

"But you don't understand," she urged with an audible sigh. "The destruction of this business is not the only result which will follow. Your exposition will forever ruin his social standing and make his once honest name a byword for dishonesty and criminal intrigue. You take all he possesses; Adrian Chester will never again be able to raise his head in the city of Ottawa, nor even in the whole province of Ontario."

In the other room the cowardly manager of the "Northern" never moved; he was the most miserable of beings—he could not move.

Only his very strong resolution prevented Max Gilbert from immediately yielding to the entreaties of

the young woman so gorgeously outlined beneath the glow of the chandelier. The sullen expression of his countenance showed how cordially he disliked the continuation of the debate.

He was leaning lightly now against the side of a Morris chair. "You think perhaps that your father's misdeeds cannot give me reason for so drastic a revenge," he objected with low defiance and accentuated impatience. "They do however. There is at least a little retributive justice in this world."

"How can a simple difference in business give you the right to treat your opponent so mercilessly?"

"This is more than a contention of business interests," he flashed back in sharp tones. "Your father's vindictiveness since the first day we met, in using every means both fair and foul to destroy me, has made it a battle of another species: it is a personal one."

"You condone your every action," she pursued coldly. "You lay your nets, set your traps, but never reflect on the cruel pain of your unfortunate victim. Please," she concluded more soothingly, "cling to your former methods and abandon your extraordinary revenge."

The pressing nature of her plea which, as he imagined excused her father and remotely argued against his own personality, had aroused him from his sullen lethargy. Far better had Flavia Chester avoided any direct allusion to her unpopular protector.

"You wish me to spare him?" he rallied excitedly, as he freed himself from the chair. "Has your father had regard for my feelings even on one solitary occa-

sion? Did he give me the hand of friendship when I saved his insurance company from bankruptcy? Did he even thank me when I made golden dividends roll into his coffers? And now does he spare me with this abominable, deceitful report? No," he concluded with a resonant thrill, "not since first he set eyes on me, has he ceased to plot for my ruin. Did he have my opportunity to-night, he would use it, if possible, even more relentlessly."

He would have said more had he not noticed how his listener was retreating before the violent outburst. "Be seated, Miss Chester," he ventured apologetically. "Let us dismiss a topic which is so disagreeable to both of us."

Silently and helplessly she sank into a chair, while Max tried by a few commonplace remarks to divert her thoughts into more pleasant channels. Her manifest inattention however proved she was not to be so easily deflected from her purpose.

"You were taught within convent walls," he changed then, "while I am the pupil of a rougher environment. My teachers were not so gentle, and their first lesson was, never to give up the hunt for your enemy until one of you had fallen. My early years were surrounded with such a poverty and privation as you can scarcely imagine. Now I stand at the threshold of my first victory, a climax after a series of struggles. Can you reasonably expect me to recede from it? You have never lived in that underworld of oppressed humanity and cannot therefore understand its sentiments when after long years it attains to a little light. All my life has been a strug-

gle against terrific odds and shall I not have my day? Your father once thought he ruined me: he threw the gauntlet into my face. Since I have taken it up, I like to fight to the end."

Flavia Chester saw how those reminiscences had provoked a sad violence in the man's heart, for rising from his chair he walked with bowed head across the room. The sympathy which ordinarily would have been elicited by his recital, was driven back by the disclosure of his own pagan cruelty, which became more evident with every sentence.

Max Gilbert was slowly becoming desperate. Was he not being thwarted on the very threshold of victory, and that indeed by a fair pleader who really should have no part in the acrimonious combat? Her determined look, and sweet insistence were dangerous to any man's perseverance, yet, had he not an indisputable right to the spoils of war? The principle motive had been withheld thus far because of the personal element in connection, but their debate had progressed to a point when it must constitute his only hope of salvation. Yes, whether prudent or not, he would overwhelm her with this final disclosure, and then untrammelled ride on to the great victory.

Max Gilbert turned about with a stronger light in his sharp eyes. "Miss Chester," he began deliberately, "listen and I'll tell you the principal reason of my vindictiveness."

Then to her surprise, she heard a narrative such as she never dreamed was possible. Sometimes her appealing muteness seemed to ask a cessation of the narrative; again she covered her face with her hands, or

turned blankly to one side. So her father had ruined the elder Gilbert, even sent him to an early grave, when at the critical moment this Dakotah appeared to swear vengeance for the deed!

Max Gilbert came to the conclusion, to find the young woman pale and helpless before him. "Stay still," she begged, not yet looking up. "Stay still." Overcome for the time, her dauntless soul was even then grasping for a stronger method of procedure. She was floundering now. "Can you not see, Max Gilbert, that I must save him? That I cannot see this disgrace come upon him?"

"My schooling taught me differently," parried the Dakotah with careless abandon. "I adhere to tenets of another belief. Many a myth still calls to me fondly while ignorance prevents my appreciating the ideals of nobler truths."

A new interest seized Flavia Chester as the discussion rose thus to a certain familiar plane. In anticipation of a more fortunate outcome she arose again, her right arm flung over the back of a chair.

"Then your present sentiments are the natural result of this strange religion," she pressed, meaningly. "I can see no reason in an act which takes its origin in a self-conceived belief, one whose tenets cannot be more than probable, nay, must be utterly false."

He was nettled slightly at having his soul's choicest thoughts brought into dispute. Max Gilbert did not however know the versatility of the disputant in this very department, else he would never have attempted its defense.

"It is the religion of nature and from nature I draw the justice of revenge," he propounded rather pompously. "What the Creator himself has expressed in the creation must be a lawful belief. Then, do we not see the perpetual, revengeful war of one element against the other. Mark the seasons, how the autumn rusts the summer, how winter rudely destroys the gold of its predecessor. Passing on to the other chief elements, the lightning tears the sky; the waters grind the rocks to powder; the rivers spring at one another to form seething destructive rapids. This has been the idea of the God who created them. What is weak succumbs to the strong; it is a perpetual war of revenge, the survival of the fittest. The earth, sea, and sky are three pages of a large book which the Creator holds up to our gaze. On every page I see written 'Revenge', and therefore I do not disdain my present sentiments."

"There is no insane war among the elements such as you have pictured," argued Flavia Chester, taking an almost dramatic pose in the center of the room. She looked indeed like a prophetess, who had received the sudden gift of explaining those three mighty pages. "Nowhere exists the disorder to justify your revenge; but everywhere is there subservience to the infinitely perfect Mind of its prime Mover. What seems a battle, is but the continuous alternation of beauty into beauty, the retreat of perfection before perfection, that our fickle minds be not tempted to tedium. The green of summer vanishes that the gold of autumn may have its turn; in like manner does autumn graciously retreat before the winter's immac-

ulate white. No season is killed, but each appears again in all its pristine splendor. Which one is the most beautiful when its time returns, no one can absolutely say."

She continued after a brief pause, her eyes sparkling, to the workings of her brilliant intellect. "The leaf which falls from the tree is not killed but mingling with the ground, is transformed into life-giving sap which comes forth again in the following year as a leaf of the most vivid green. Even when autumn is not seen, it lies in its leaves below the snow, making the ground richly productive for the ensuing spring. So also with vanishing winter which sends its melted snows to fill every river and brook for the long months of summer. The seasons are not hostile, but mutual help to one another."

Max Gilbert had fallen back in astonishment before the masterly refutation of his ideas. How her cheeks had glowed with the irrepressible ardor of her passionate soul! His inherent prejudices could not however be overthrown by a single argument, and wishing moreover to check her progress, he returned confidently to the combat.

"If revenge is not the underlying principle of creation, why then have all primitive peoples adhered to the tenet? Is there not also a line in your own Bible which says 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth'?"

He had placed the greatest argument of all into her hands, and now he must surrender to her entreaties: all apathy vanished as becoming enthused over prospective victory, she pleaded her mission with irre-

sistible vehemence; the lustrous eyes sparkled to their inmost depths; her beautiful head was thrown back, as if breathing a perfumed atmosphere. The keen-witted woman was in her own familiar sphere, and now she must conquer.

"What you mention was indeed the old law, was the practise of pagan nations in those distant ages of darkness," she replied. "It is to ask you to forsake a principle which died with their death, that I make my last appeal to you."

Gilbert retreated a step, as if in fear of the vehemence now transporting her.

Still more solemnly continued the beautiful young woman. "Your principle ceased to exist, when there appeared amongst men the Son of God with that sublime doctrine, 'But I say to you, love your enemies'. Forsake this religion of your phantasy which dares to stand aloof from the economy founded by the Second Person of the Holy Trinity itself. You dare not proceed with your inhuman act in the face of a command emanating from God Himself."

As the appealing figure attained still greater heights of sublimity, as the deep eyes shone with a light scarce earthly, Max Gilbert's resolution was put to its severest test. Still the child of the Dakotahs dare not yield.

"Don't, don't, Miss Chester," he exclaimed, feebly stretching forth a hand as if to protect himself from the torrent of her eloquence.

But Flavia Chester had become another being, who was no longer able to stem the irresistible tide which arose from her religious soul. "You are not different

from other men, that you can despise the law which the gentle Christ gave us. Are you greater than the Man-God that you are excused from imitating His divine example? Of the very enemies who nailed Him to the cross, He said, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do'. Have you been more grievously offended than Christ, that you can refuse forgiveness?"

The dismayed manager had sunk into a chair and covered his face with his hands. "Don't, don't," he begged once more. "I don't want to hear those things."

More than a pleader, Flavia Chester had become an apostle. She had ascended to a higher plane, was dealing with heaven's own arguments, to which the unchristian Gilbert felt it were blasphemous to reply.

Then as she proceeded with her doctrines of sweet charity, a voice from the past suddenly and so strangely found its echoes in Max Gilbert's heart. Why had he not sooner recalled the incident, the vow? She spoke to him of the charity of God, why did he not remember her own sublime example in the years of long ago. The story of Christ was holy, but to Max Gilbert's material mind the example in one of God's creatures was still more convincing. How could he have so blinded himself as to forget under what great obligations he was to Flavia Chester! Severely he reprimanded himself for having taken a vow and then allowed this grand opportunity for its fulfilment to pass by unnoticed. We will make no judgment beyond stating that the debate might have been protracted indefinitely had Flavia Chester not

several times used language very similar to the man's vow, and thus recalled him to that scene of the past; his great hatred for her father can alone explain why he had not remembered it long before.

Away with all other ambitions; he loved his Doree; he loved this woman; he remembered the vow which united him to both.

Max Gilbert had arisen with a look in his eyes soft as a woman's; the brow was clear of anger; the lips fluttered nervously. In some strange manner, Flavia Chester had recalled his forgotten vow. -

"Stay, Flavia," he begged kindly now and soothingly. "Plead no more—it is not necessary." For long he was silent and Flavia wondered what strange sentiment had suddenly softened him. "You have spoken to me of the charity of Christ," he continued, "and I should have understood"—a pause—"only I was influenced more by example than by doctrine. Flavia," he breathed with deep emotion, "your description of Christ's goodness recalled me to a strange vow, and to a sublime act of charity which I will briefly explain. I only chide myself for not remembering it from the outset."

"Will you be seated," he asked tenderly and now so softly, "while I tell you a strange story of the years gone by." In wonderment she obeyed.

Then as briefly as possible he told her of his first meeting with Doree. Many a time he paused as if to live just for a brief moment the scenes he loved so well. His sentiments were become holy to Flavia Chester and she never hastened him, never interrupted him.

"My parents were dead," he was saying, "and only a baby sister remained to whom I could communicate my intelligence. When first she looked up at me from her tears, I beheld such a wondrously innocent face that I said, for a sister the great Michabo had given me an angel. My position before the child was an awkward one, since my strange costume tended rather to create suspicion than confidence in the novel story I had to relate."

"I don't know what came over me," he pursued in a peculiarly soft tone while his hand went to shade his eyes, "but when that innocent child approached me frankly and said she believed my word without further proof, such a strange thrill passed over me as I had never before experienced. Perhaps it was because in my former rough life I had never known the holier sentiments existing between brother and sister; perhaps her helplessness appealed to me; perhaps it was the relief to my own loneliness to discover at least one confiding soul. I believe all three facts combined to produce the sentiment. At any rate I conceived such a love for my baby sister as, come weal or woe, can never be obliterated in this life. Overpowered by this feeling, I took her beside the body of my dead father and solemnly made the vow to which one of your phrases has recalled me to-night." This time the pause was longer than usual.

Then after a while he came to Doree's academy life. "I never knew how insufficient was the money I sent her until one evening she unconsciously imparted the facts to me. Though I did my best, I could not clothe her becomingly, or at least in such a man-

ner as would allow her to move on an equal plane with the other young ladies of the academy. Truth compels me to state that the sister whom I loved so well was on that account even insulted and despised.

"Within those academy walls," he continued impressively, "there was one young lady who did not condemn my little sister for the poor clothes an indigent brother had to buy. One person," he declared with rising and thrilling voice, "did not pass sarcasms about my little angel; one did not ostracize her; one did not regard my lack of money as a reason for scorn. I told you I swore an oath beside the body of my dead father," he went on as he advanced meaningly. "That oath was, 'Whoever shall injure my sister shall never escape my vengeance; and whoever befriends her shall be my friend and shall never ask aught of me in vain'."

"Flavia Chester," he spoke with touching tenderness as he bent over her, "you are the person of whom I have been speaking: you befriended my sister and you shall never ask aught of me in vain. To-night you request me to foresake my drastic revenge upon your father. I yield. You were kind to my little Doree—to you I surrender."

She leaped to her feet as those last words fell from his lips. Perhaps the sacrifice was almost too great for Max Gilbert seeking a chair allowed his head languidly to fall on his breast.

"How can I thank you," she fervently exclaimed as she perceived his misty eyes. "You're a great man; you're a noble soul. Pardon me for the reflections I made on your character. I said you were heartless,

but now I know that you possess a heart with oceans of affection. I've wronged you. You'll forgive me, won't you?"

"There's nothing to forgive, Chuck," he spoke with a faint smile. "Your appeal to my nobler sentiments should have had its sway only I always was moved more by example than by doctrine."

"Let me thank you again," she repeated warmly. "The renunciation of your scheme has been, I know, a terrible sacrifice, a heroic act." Looking absently to one side, she murmured to herself, "My father is saved: he is saved from disgrace."

Both were startled by a sudden exclamation from the portiered door. "Max Gilbert! Flavia!" There stood the cause of their combat, Adrian Chester, with a look upon his face such as neither had ever seen before; he seemed crushed by defeat, yet elevated by personal victory; disgraced before a world, yet conquering himself; discovered yet peacefully secure; lost for long years in the wilderness of hate, yet emerging into the light of a new gospel.

"I have heard your whole debate," he began meekly. "I was forced to listen because its strangeness rooted me to the spot." Lovingly his eye fell upon the still staring young women. "Flavia, you're a noble daughter; you are kind, sincere, charitable, as even your mother was."

His gaze wandered to Max Gilbert but apparently he was lost for a beginning. Instead he walked forward and silently extended his hand. The other took it, pressed it, when Adrian Chester broke down and wept like a child.

Max seized the brief silence to make a peculiar remark to Flavia. "I see it all now," he observed, a happy light in his eyes. "The myths of Dakota days are gone at last and through the mirror of charity I see it all." He was talking now like a happy child. "My sacrifice has taken everything from me and it has given me everything. I love the story of that Man-God who came to the world with the new commandment 'that you love one another'. I believe in a faith which can produce such angelic souls as my lost Doree." A pause. "I don't know what has come over me but there's a strange warm feeling in my heart which has dispelled the mists of olden days: charity has given me light, has raised me up that I long to be with that superior, noble, divine faith which was founded by God Himself. It is purer, more heavenly, far more sublime, else it could not have produced you and my Doree. Henceforth it shall be mine."

The manager of the 'Northern' had recovered himself. "To-night I cannot say very much for I am weak and trembling," he started rising. "All your knowledge of my illegal acts is true, and I know that you could have used it to disgrace me forever in the whole province of Ontario. I seek no excuse for my vindictiveness to your father, and of late years to you; all those years are dark, yes, dark." He feared they would tire of his story. "Be seated, for I only have a few words to say." After a brief silence he proceeded dreamily. "I am conquered, yes, conquered and that indeed by charity. I never knew there was charity in this world until to-night when I heard of

Flavia's kind act to a little girl in an academy; I never knew there was charity in this world until I heard of a brother's almost insane love for this same little Doree; all this I never knew until I beheld my greatest enemy give up a long-nurtured revenge; until I saw him repay charity with charity still more heroic and all because of his great love for a delicate little child."

Their eyes were moist as this aged man gave expression to sentiments which surely had not been in his heart for many a long year. "Pardon a very pertinent digression," he went on. Then he turned to his late enemy. "The business strife is past, Max Gilbert, and you have conquered. You would have driven my company out of existence but even with your great sacrifice, no force in Ottawa can prevent its dissolution. Your popularity which will only increase with time, will be a force that the 'Northern' cannot withstand; your great victory of yesterday will make you the insurance king of the Dominion; the 'Northern' with its officials will be forgotten as all from east to west, from north to south hasten once more under your standard." His voice had sunk almost to a whisper when he came to the most disagreeable detail. "It is not necessary for you to discredit the 'Northern' for my general agent gave it the death-blow at your meeting; men knew the 'Northern' officials to be inimical to you, but Fink forever and wholly discredited us when he attempted the refutation of your story before those thousand listeners; to-day the whole city holds one of our highest officials guilty of an untruth. I come to a close,

Mr. Gilbert," he remarked with bowed head. "The only salvation for the 'Northern' is amalgamation with the 'Western World'; if we try to stand alone we are doomed. To-night you have practised such a heroic act of charity, that I long during my few remaining years to be considered your friend and to do all in my power to atone for the past. As manager of the 'Northern', I will therefore use all my influence to have the company speedily amalgamated with yours; when that event has come to pass, Adrian Chester will voluntarily resign in order to give you the undisputed management of the two concerns." There was no sadness in the man's look as he spoke the meaning words; instead, you could see a light as of the reflection of the charity practised before him that evening.

And charity had ushered in a more beautiful and a more complete victory than could ever have been accomplished by Max Gilbert's harsh plan. Kindness had converted his greatest enemy: kindness had suddenly become the mirror to show himself the truth.

"I scarcely know what answer to make," faltered Max dazedly, "for in some strange yet peaceful way all my dreams have come true. Perhaps your plan is the better one, even from a business standpoint; Ottawa is not large enough for two rival concerns."

"Yes, Mr. Gilbert; but I must retire," changed the older man. "We will discuss the details at a later day. Till then and ever afterwards, you are welcome at my home."

"I'll call to-morrow," happily declared Max with a meaning look at Flavia Chester.

Chester was turning about to leave them. "To-night," he concluded softly, "I'll sleep as happily as when a boy without sin, without care. Yes, the love of man to man—"

"Hark!" noticed Flavia. "The Chimes! It is the New Year!"

"The old is done," came from her father.

And the chimes pealed softly, called sweetly to men to practise honesty and love in the year before them.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE.

WHEN THE WAYWARD WATERS HAVE SOBBED THEMSELVES TO REST.

It was the afternoon of the following day that Max Gilbert called at the Chester home, this time to see the fair Princess of the castle. Flavia awaited him in the parlor. A winter sun finely laced by curtains of delicate texture cast its spray of gentle loveliness about the figure in olive green, to make of her a fairy with royal right to receive homage and obedience from the hundred inhabitants of her castle.

"The conflict is over, Miss Chester," he began as he seated himself. "Now at last can we enjoy the calm to which we have looked forward for so many years."

"It was a magnificently fought battle," she returned warmly, "and truly deserves a peace which will endure forever." Her womanly intuition had already taken note of Gilbert's peculiar mental state, although as yet she did not dare to diagnose its exact nature.

"Looking back over the years," he added reminiscently, "it was the strangest battle of alternating reverses and successes of which I have ever heard."

"And why, during the whole conflict did you consider me indifferent?" she queried pleasantly. "Or better, how could you? If everyone in the two cities were interested why shouldn't Flavia Chester have her prejudices?"

"My wish probably was father of the thought," responded Max in a matter-of-fact way. "Revenge must be carried out, and therefore I foolishly deluded myself into thinking you indifferent." He turned to Flavia as if awaiting her approval. "You see, Miss Chester, how in theory at least I could accomplish my own designs against Chester while at the same time, at least, in theory no evil result would fall upon you. Then you see how at our meeting in the park you had removed yourself so far from me that I felt no thought of you could or should keep me from my life's work."

"I see, and I don't see," she smiled. "Too much theory."

Rather unthinkingly Max continued. "In spite of the deception I practiced upon myself, you pleaded with me very frequently. No," he smiled studying the carpet, "last night was not the first time your eloquence nearly overwhelmed me. I used to close my eyes to the truth, persuade myself at the last moment you would be far out of harm's way, but it was all in vain. At other times again your entreaties were so strong, that my only chance of victory lay in banishing you from my thoughts."

Beautiful flushes were playing upon Flavia's face during the artless narration.

"I did not succeed, however, with the severer plan of banishing you from my thoughts," he declared now seriously as he leaned towards her.

Woman-like she laughed to divert his thoughts, although every word was become sweetest music to her soul. "You see I had intruded myself so contin-

ually into your affairs that you naturally expected me to be a vexatious obstacle at the last moment." Still there was no reason why she should toy nervously with a lace cuff which needed no attention whatever. "But," he insisted meaningly as he noticed her drooping eyelids, "haven't our few meetings been very, very strange?"

"Peculiar," Flavia admitted and denied. She looked up, her large eyes filled with life and youth. "I can see the first meeting still," came from one who was fresher than a rose. "I see the swollen river, the wall of ice, the on-rushing log, a flying form, a flying spear—saved."

"I see another scene," he returned more quietly though. "I see the interior of an academy, a little girl, a big girl, a kind act—saved from a heart-break."

Suddenly the hand which had lain carelessly over the arm of her chair, was made a prisoner to his gentle touch. She made a faint motion of resistance, then so very quickly came to the conclusion he was too strong and she too weak.

"There is another scene far more significant for both of us," he pressed tenderly. The depths of her dark eyes persistently declared sentiments not less fervent than the words of her interrogator; vainly did she turn them downward, for the soul's speech would not be quieted.

"I refer to a certain scene at Doree's death-bed," he pursued, feverishly watching the play on her countenance for answer. Scarcely knowing why, Flavia had timorously risen to her feet. Her hand still in his grasp, Max Gilbert likewise arose. "Perhaps

superstition may underlie my feelings, but I have always attached the greatest meaning to her action; it was the last act of a saint and some say their vision is at such a time prophetic. Don't you think it was an augury that our hands should be joined some future day?"

She trembled and was at a loss for a reply. Indeed from the first day this man had been her idea of masculine strength of soul and every succeeding incident had only proved how well he merited her esteem.

Why should he further delay the precious avowal; had not her actions during the last year given him indisputable reason for fondest hopes?

His eyes were aglow with tender passion. "Flavia," he breathed eagerly, "from the first day something indescribable drew me towards you. Especially this last year have I thought of you almost continuously, have dreamed of you night after night. Flavia, I am not well versed in the language of love, but I love you and love you truly."

A light probably of joy passed over her countenance, while her breast heaved perceptibly as this fervent declaration fell from his lips. Long had she waited for such a crowning moment of happiness, but now too soon at least for her mental composure did it come—but ah, sweet lack of composure when love plays its thrilling tune!

"Flavia," he pleaded more strongly, perceiving the hopeful sign, "may I expect some return from you?"

Her head was raised ever so fondly towards him. "You need not expect," she replied with innocent frankness. "You have it already; I do love you."

Her hand unwittingly sought his shoulders, and the remainder which both might have said was better expressed in the story their pressed lips told each other.

"Max," she began as this act relieved her of further shyness. "I believe I have always loved you. As soon as you came into my life, all other men receded. The brave lumberman on the river was just as lovable to the convent girl as the successful insurance manager to the woman. That may be a very unflattering confession," she smiled prettily, "but even your Flavia is wayward at times."

"May your delightful waywardness ever continue," he replied in quiet happiness.

"It will." And again he took her to his heart. During the ensuing hour, Max Gilbert discovered that her affections were as deep as her beautiful soul. Like the nymph with whom he had always loved to compare her, she had found the pleasant spring where henceforth would be her habitation.

"And to think that I'll marry a riverman!" she remarked gaily. "I'll live the remainder of my life with a man once clothed in long spiked boots, rubber coat, and oil-skin cap."

"What if we could have taken a glance into the future when we first met on the Ottawa!" he returned maintaining the cheerful strain.

"Perhaps it would have made you forget your friend in the water," she replied banteringly. Her words, her very actions were aglow with love's satisfied thrill. The battle with its thousand uncertainties

had been so long; now peace was the more blessed, love was the far sweeter.

Like children they rehearsed every incident, giving everything a thousand meanings of which surely many were most illogical. They knew it too, but they loved to run in the blind channels, just for the glee of having to return laughingly to the realities.

Suddenly they heard the tinkle of sleigh bells as Chester's cutter drew up before the house. Shortly afterwards Adrian Chester himself rapped at the parlor door.

"A friend in Hull desires to see you this afternoon, Flavia," explained her father. Then turning smilingly to Gilbert, "Perhaps you would not object to being the driver."

"Not at all; not at all. I accept with pleasure."

"God bless you both," finished the old man, not finding it hard to read the turn of events.

On crossing the bridge between the two cities they happily ran into our old friend Dick. Dick was always at the right place at the right time.

"Ye prophets and patriarchs!" he gasped out as a certain truth faintly dawned upon him. "If that isn't the abomination of consolation!"

The horse was brought to a stop, whereupon the irrepressible young man had, of course, to have his suspicion satisfied. "Congratulations," he shouted enthusiastically at the conclusion. "Really I don't know which of you deserves the most of them; you both traded yourself away for full value. Yes—'value received', as they say in business."

"Thanks, Dick," returned one who no matter in

what circumstances would always be the truest friend. "Since, however, we cannot obstruct the traffic any longer, we'll have to leave other explanations for another time. Good-day."

"I may meet you in Hull," the agent shouted after them. "There's a big labor meeting in session at the City Hall." And away he went giving expression to his happy feelings in a pair of eyes unusually sparkling, and a merry whistle.

Max turned graciously to his beautiful companion. "Where do you wish to go for the wedding trip?" he asked smilingly.

"I must honor and obey," she laughed. "You choose therefore, and I will make my first heroic act of obedience."

"Since you leave it to me, I would suggest a visit to the home of Silver Fox," he proposed reminiscently.

"Fine! Fine!" she applauded, "because I was very sorry that I didn't see the old chief at the time of his dramatic appearance in our city."

"Do you remember the scene on this river, Max?" she remarked with a meaning inflection.

"Yes," he returned, "and Miss Flavia bore herself very bravely in the ordeal. Truth compels me to say, however, that she would hardly have been in a presentable condition for a New Year's ball; her forehead was bleeding; her hair was dishevelled, and her dress was badly tattered. I do not know what the feminine gender of the word is, but to use my own invention, you showed yourself a hardy river-lady."

She laughed. Then pointing to the east. "See, Max, there we jumped on the raft; near the first boom

I tried to run logs with you but became tired very soon; down another fifty feet I made a second inglorious attempt, until finally we arrived at the boom." She pursed her sweet lips. "Near that large tree on the bank the brave river-lady fainted."

Thus their smoothly flowing conversation gilded the moments and made life seem like one unending dream of happiness.

Once more had Max Gilbert's entry into Hull been detected. In five minutes the labor meeting heard the announcement, "Max Gilbert is in your city."

Now at last could they wipe out their former disgraceful actions by giving their saviour the honor he so richly deserved. Suddenly the two in the cutter were confronted with a dense crowd waving caps and rending the air with the gratulating clamor.

"All Hull is pouring forth to give you honor," softly murmured Flavia as happily she gazed about her. "See how their numbers are rapidly increasing. You are forever enshrined in the hearts of these people."

Gladly would Max have escaped this public notice, but the joyful populace would listen to no word of restraint. Like a triumphal procession for a returned victor, did the congested masses joyously follow on either side, never abating in their acclamations for "Le Brave Gilbert! La Belle Femme!"

Then someone noticed the agent standing near. "Up with him," came an English voice, and Dick was placed on their shoulders to become part of the huzzahing parade.

These enthusiastic French-Canadians were indeed

displaying their appreciation of Max Gilbert's noble efforts in their behalf.

Dick sustained his character for eccentricity by taking his exit from this story in a manner diametrically opposed to every rule of human action. While being thus borne along he happened to glance at a feminine figure upon a certain balcony to notice the strangest resemblance to his own beloved Dorce. Although his bolder stare finally forced the young woman within doors, her memory remained. In fact, we will anticipate by saying that Dick never ceased to wonder at the similarity until several weeks afterwards he secured an introduction of this daughter of a wealthy merchant. The personal meeting, however, could in no way prevent wondering, indeed it served only to generate like sentiments in the other party. Finally they could not endure such wondering any longer and it came to pass that Richard Kildare and Dorothy Lothair, etc., etc.

Far into the distance has the gleeful procession wended its way, and more faint now become the acclamations for Canada's foremost insurance manager, Max Gilbert, sometime Indian, sometime riverman, but now and to the end of his life, the idol of their hearts.

Date Due _____

[illegible]

PS 3503 R94 M46 1915
BRUCE MAGNUS A
MAX OF THE NORTH

39197792 HSS



000002312106

PS 3503 R94 M46 1915
Bruce, Magnus A.
Max of the North;

0099634A MAIN

U OF A

2485138

A7567